

## **Ishmael Shalash**

The Emerging Leaders Institute (ELI) was a great program designed in teaching current leaders how to become great leaders. At first I came into this class uneasy. I really could not see how a one-semester class was going to make me a great leader. But in fact it didn't really teach me how to become a great leader. It taught me to look and see what I already have inside and to expand upon that. I learned we all have leadership quantities, but only the truly great leaders know how to use it.

The one important thing I learned all semester was leadership couldn't be taught, it has to be driven from within. There were times during my leadership project where I got discouraged and frustrated. I think the main problem I had was I was trying too much. I wanted to get going and make things happen. But I finally realized that for things to develop it takes time. Eventually, my project got up off the ground and started to develop. And along the way, I learned many lessons I hope that will stay with me a long time. While my short time in ELI, I had the opportunities to listen to great minds in showing us certain leadership skills.

The most effective aspect of leadership I learned was communication. Before, I was not a very communication oriented person. Derek Lane was one of our speakers during the course. He taught us the use of communication in establishing leadership. I learned from Lane the importance of communication. In fact, my individual project was based on my ability to communicate with others. My project consisted of asking for donations for the cause of diabetes. And for me to get those donations I had to convince companies that this was a great cause. Before, I probably couldn't do it, because I really didn't know how to talk to people. The biggest problem I had with my communication

skills was a lack of confidence. When I finally was able to build up my confidence, I find myself pulling donations all over the place. Sometimes simply having a good cause isn't enough. You have to be able to express your cause in a convincing manner. Overall my project was quite a success and is still running strong.

There have been many interesting times during my ELI experience. I believe the one activity though that caught my attention the most was meditating during class. At first I really thought it was kind of dumb, but it wasn't really until the end I realized its effect. Meditation was a new experience for me. It opened my mind up and let my body loose. It gave me a sense of comfort. This new experience taught me to slow down and enjoy the space around me. I learned that time can be an enemy as well as an ally. It really depends on how it s used. The class itself is designed to teach us aspects of leadership, but it also allows us to learn from the other students. This class couldn't be more diverse. I had the opportunity to see different issues through the eyes of so many diverse people. At the same time these people will be my future friends as well as future mentors. I am real excited to see what all of us as a group can do to make a change. I hope in four or five years I will see the same people in this class out in the real world making a statement.

So now that I have all these new experiences, what do I do with them? For starters I am definitely going to get more involved here on campus. The main reason I even applied to ELI was to see what kind of qualities I have. I needed a class like this that will show me what I can do. I didn't know what I could do to expand my leadership skills. Now I have a clearer picture on what I am capable of doing. I can use what I have learned to teach others as well as build my own character. I am really glad I took this class,

because I have more confidence in myself than I ever had. And don't think I would feel this way if I didn't have this type of guidance. I always had the passion and desire inside me, but now I have the chance to let it out. As I mentioned before, every member of ELI 2001 came in as leaders and we are leaving as truly great leaders.