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In the past three months I have faced several challenges, but right now I face a challenge of describing this wonderful experience in just 750 words. So many events, activities, and people, have affected my life and way of thinking this semester. I will try to reflect on those that had the most profound effect on me throughout this paper.

One thing that is hard for me to discuss is the ways that I did not change. To elaborate, when I first came into this class I told myself I wanted to be the quiet one and the one everybody liked. I wanted to play a different role than I always had in past experiences. However, week one hit me right in the face with the DISC Personal Profile. There it was, in black and white, DOMINANT. I began asking myself why I had this urge to speak out and give my opinions all the time. I wondered if I was really that bad of a listener. As the weeks went on and I began to realize I wasn't the only one with these tendencies to take charge and speak out, finally I understood. There is no way I can simply turn off who I am and stop being talkative and opinionated. I realized that a lot of this had to do with the way I grew up. I have always been encouraged to speak my mind and not let other people decide what is right for me. Unfortunately, growing up like this did leave me lacking on the listening skills end. I found that ELI sessions like "conflict management" and "appreciating diversity" helped me to strengthen my listening skills. Even though many times I still wanted to jump out and say something I truly desired to hear other people's stories and ideas also. So as ELI comes to an end I understand that it is OK to be dominant and talkative but it is also important to listen to those around you. One of my favorite quotes says "Life is what happens to us while we are making other plans." I feel like this quote fit the way I used to act. I was too busy with my own ideas to stop and

hear everyone else's. I do feel like I have grown in this way, especially when a challenge presents itself, that I don't know how to accomplish on my own.

Having to do the individual project this semester really opened my eyes. I suddenly became not so dominant. I had all these great ideas of things I loved, like community service, and volunteering in hospitals. However, when it came to talking other people into doing these things, I was left with a blank slate. At first I just couldn't understand why everyone wouldn't want to volunteer and help others. I guess this is reflective of my past as well. I grew up around a family who was constantly volunteering in every way possible. If there was a job to be done, my family did it. I realize now that they often took on too much. Anyway, working with my small group and getting to know their personal situations helped me understand why not everyone may feel the same way I did about volunteering. My mentor really helped me face my fears of getting up in front of a group of high school kids and the support and enthusiasm my group gave me was also very helpful. Knowing that other people cared how my project was going and what my worries were really helped me.

Our group project at the Ronald McDonald House was another eye opener for me. As mentioned before, most of the volunteer work I did was always individual or family based. I had rarely worked with an entire group of people who all wanted to be helping those less fortunate. My heart smiled at the efforts the whole group made to have everything perfect. The group project also helped me get to know a few people a little better. I realized that everyone has a little bit of that dominance in them when they need it, but that some just don't pull it out as often as I tend to. I only wish I had more time to

get to know people more intimately, because they are each a great novel full of wonderful tales.

As this class and this semester come to a close I do have a want to get more involved in my campus. I spent my entire first year here trying to focus on my classes and making the grades I needed to get into medical school. Now as my sophomore year comes to a close, I realize that I need other things besides classes and studying in my life. I need things to keep me sane, when the organic chemistry gets to rough. Seeing so many of the other ELI members who are already so involved has also made me want to find that organization that's right for me. I know that I will continue to volunteer on my own and to talk to others about volunteering, but I think I have a desire to do something more now. Something campus oriented. I hope that I will be able to take the skills and experiences this class has given me and apply them in all of my future endeavors. To close, I just want to say that in my opinion ELI stands for "Exceptional," "Long-Lasting," and "Irreplaceable."