

Julie Stewart

Challenges, insights, friendships, self discoveries, and discussions were some of the things experienced in the lives of twenty-seven of the most accomplished and intriguing people I have ever met and in my life as well. We, members of the two thousand and one spring class of the Emerging Leaders Institute, have spent a lot of time with each other learning through all the distinctive experiences brought to the class. From the first day I knew I was in for an exciting encounter with these individuals, all blessed with gifts with which they expressed extremely well to me that leadership isn't your A-typical definition.

Throughout my life I have had this imagine of a leader as a strong, powerful person who has a dream and achieves success through all their endeavors. It was through my time spent with the unique people in the Institute that I realized that John W. Gardner was correct with saying,

"Leaders come in many forms, with many styles and diverse qualities. There are quiet leaders and leaders one can hear in the next county. Some find strength in eloquence, some in judgment, some in courage."

This statement is so reflective on the process of leadership. Not only does it explain that people who don't fit the cookie cutter of a leader are still leading, but it shows how people use their gifts to find the strength to be a determined, compassionate leader.

My fellow peers in our weekly sessions, mentor meetings, group service project, and personal project presentations have taught me this lesson very vividly. During one of, if not the very first session, we discovered what our DISC profile expressed about our

personality. The class had a supply of D's (dominates), I's (Influence), S's (steadiness), and C's (conscientiousness) to complete the entire spectrum of different dimensions of behaviors simply within the class roster. The results of these profiles gave lead to the respective personalities of all my fellow classmates. What they didn't tell me was that even though someone produced a strong conscientious attribute within their profile, they too could be a successful and amazing leader. Each and every member of the class proved to me through their actions, words, and presentations that leaders truly come in every form.

The people also allowed me to realize how much can be done by one person. Each character week in and week out conveyed a new particular sector of their life which has given them inspiration and helped to develop their character. I had never recognized exactly how many different paths a college student can take, with the dependency on their background. Students in the class are involved in student government, Cosmopolitan Club, Black Voices, Black Student Union, Student Activities Board, as well as several other organizations on campus and off campus too. Through these affiliations they brought an aspect of campus others had no experience with and showed our class exactly how they were involved. The leadership roles possessed by my peers amazed me and inspired me that I too could get involved and begin the process of change on this considerably large campus.

When refreshing my memory on the content of my application I realized the main theme weaved through my entire essay was the ideal that I was "floating on campus having no real purpose". I had high hopes in the Institute. Claiming that I believed it "could increase my chances of fulfillment" of the "desire of a sense of meaning", I

anticipated a refreshed, renewed consciousness of this desire that I was sadly missing, through my experience in the class. With participation in class activities and involvement in discussions I knew my place on this campus would be found. Instead of reaching some kind of epiphany during one of the many leadership orientated discussion sessions I claimed an identity for myself upon completion of the course and after a period of reflection.

I realized that the people, as I have explained previously, with which I extended friendship and shared part of myself with, are the ones who have showed me what my role is and can be here at the University of Kentucky. Although I wasn't overly involved this past year in positions in the public's view I know that I will be actively involved next year with all the undertakings I feel pulled to involve myself in completely.

The activity found within the "Emerging Leader's Institute's" community is all the inspiration I need to get out and get involved. From the meekest, quietest individual to the most boisterous, dominate person, each one of the members of the Emerging Leader's spring of two thousand and one class are leaders, all in their own right. I thank each one of my new found friends for their inspiration, insight, and their help for me to realize that I too have potential for involvement within the campus community.