

Aimee Boyd

Emerging Leader. When I hear this phrase the words outstanding, brave, individual, important, helpful, powerful, growth and development come to mind. This phrase and these words represent who I have become over the past semester.

The Emerging Leader Institute or ELI is something I heard about in my UK 101 class and later received a brochure about in my mailbox. It sounded interesting, and since I had always considered myself a leader I decided to apply for it. I thought it would be a good way to meet new people and learn a few more leadership skills. I did gain new friends and skills from this class, as well as so much more. ELI developed me into a stronger and more appreciative person. I am now more aware of my surroundings and have discovered my inner self as well as what is important to me. ELI taught me the importance of leadership and showed me what I can do with the qualities of leadership as well as what I can do with the person I am developing into. I do not want to say the cliché thing that ELI totally changed my life, because it did not. I am still the same person I have always been, but now I am stronger, more developed, focused, and ready to accomplish any task set before me.

The first week of class we took the Myers-Briggs Personality test and spent two days focusing on our own and others' personality types. We talked about how we can use the strengths of our personalities to counteract our weaknesses. Not only did I learn about myself and my personality (ISTJ - Introversion, Sensing, Thinking, Judging), I also learned about the fifteen other types of personalities people can have. This explained a lot to me about why I do certain tasks certain ways and why certain things bother me. For example, the J in my personality stands for judging. I am a very organized and structured

person, and before when my schedule would not go according to plan I would get very upset and frustrated. I now know how to deal with these faults and how I can turn them into assets in my life. I understand that it is not the end of the world if everything does not go according to plan and I am now more flexible with my life, but I still carry my planner. I can also use my understanding of the personality types to work with others in the future, whether it is in a leadership role or as a friend.

With ELI I was privileged to hear many speakers come and share their thoughts about leadership topics such as communication, diversity, and community service. Although I enjoyed all of the speakers, the person I learned the most from was Dr. Raymond Betts, a former teacher at UK and Director of the Gaines Center for the Humanities at UK. He was outstanding and smart, and I was in awe of him the whole time he shared with us. He gave us his perspectives on leadership and made us aware of characteristics each leader should strive to gain such as compassion, decisiveness, knowledge, appearance (presence/poise) and courage. As he talked about each of these I tried to think of myself and if I exemplify any of these qualities, and if not, I thought about how I could work to gain them. His presentation made me think a lot and it continues to do so each time I ponder on it – I think that is why I liked it so much, because it has actually stuck with me.

The last part of ELI that really impacted my life was our individual leadership projects. Sure I had done community service projects in the past, but all I had to do was sign my name to a sheet and show up at the church parking lot on a Saturday morning. Do not get me wrong, these projects were a big deal and did involve hard work and effort, but the reason I am saying they did not take much was because someone else had

planned them. I was on the youth council at my church, but we simply suggested ideas and our youth minister took care of the rest of the details. Here in ELI there were no adults or youth ministers to give me a project and to tell me to hop in the van and go. Here I had to do it all on my own. The brainstorming, the pre-planning, the calling, the asking, the emailing, the date and time planning, the stress, the setup and teardown, the whole nine yards. This project and its success was up to me. I had to challenge myself to stay on top of the project and not give up. I had to implement the leadership skills I already had while trying out new skills I had learned in class and even learning some new skills on my own. I had to reach within myself and work hard, not just during the project, but also before and after it in order for it to be a success. While this was new and kind of scary for me, in the end it was one of the most successful moments of my life. I had put a project together on my own with potential to save others' lives by raising awareness about organ donations and becoming an organ donor myself. I found a new passion of mine that I desire to continue working with in the future either through programs or through my own personal sharing.

Since you have heard my "what" and "so what", let me now share my "now what". I plan on continuing to develop myself with what I learned in ELI and use this growth to teach others about leadership. This may involve simply telling them about the class or it may be through my actions, such as my Organ Donor Program or other activities I become involved with here at UK or around Lexington. I am going to be an RA (Residents Hall Assistant) next year, which will give me a perfect opportunity to implement my new leadership skills. I know I will continue to grow and discover more leadership qualities, but right now I am excited to see what my ELI experience holds for

my future as a student, friend, businesswoman, and most importantly for me, myself,

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