

**Katherine Nolan**

***"The leadership instinct you are born with is the backbone.  
You develop the funny bone and the wishbone that go with it."  
-Elaine Agather***

I have always been a fan of quotes. Occasionally during the course of human existence, statements are uttered that carry a resounding truth. Some of them are lost, but luckily a few are written down for us to learn from and to use when our own words fail. I have never come across a quote that is as fitting as this one to describe my experience with ELI. I feel like I have grown a few extra "bones" through the course of the semester, and have strengthened those I already possessed.

My decision to take this class came out of a bigger decision I had made about the kind of person I wanted to be. I realized that I had kind of expected things to be handed to me in college just because I have been the "smart kid" all my life, regardless of whether I act like it or not. This is not the case, and it took me a whole semester of skipping class and not really making the effort to learn to force me understand that. So during Christmas, when I had a lot of time on my hands to think, I decided things needed to change. I feel really lucky to have had this opportunity handed to me at such a moment, which reinforces the belief that I have always held that luck is the readiness to take a good opportunity when it comes.

Through my experiences in this class, I have learned that leadership takes rehearsal. The more you step up to take the helm, the less intimidating it becomes. Like Lance Brunner discussed in his presentation, visiting the edge of your comfort zone gets easier with practice. Also, the unsaid expectation that the students in this class will go on to take leadership roles in this university has also given me more faith in my ability as a

leader. Being told "you are a leader!" either verbally outright, or implied in a lesson, gave me a lot of faith in myself. And I have acted on this faith on several occasions, and am proud of myself for doing that.

I feel like this class has honestly given me skills that I will use in real life. A couple weeks ago, the New Member Chair of Kappa asked me if I would be her assistant for the coming year. This is a really huge job, but I agreed to do so and I am incredibly excited. The time between Bid Day and Initiation is the most crucial period for the new pledges. During these eight weeks they really learn what Kappa is about and the standards they are expected to meet as new members. We are responsible for teaching them that, and initiating the bonds of sisterhood between the members of new pledge class. These bonds are the backbone and the future of our chapter. These girls will look to us for guidance about a lot of things during pledging, not just sorority-related issues but freshman issues in general. I think the things I have learned in ELI will help me handle that a lot more gracefully and confidently. Louise Stone's concept of learning the needs of a group before you dive in is a great one, and I think it will make me a lot more sensitive to what our new girls need from the surrogate mother I am expected to be.

Doing this project has shown me that I can actually make things happen. Creating a plan and putting it into action was really empowering. A lot of times in the past I have thought that people wouldn't take me or my ideas seriously because I was young. This experience has proved me wrong. If you take yourself seriously, then it will be hard for others to disagree. Appearing confident and together is more important in any leadership role than I had realized before.

One thing I have learned about my motivation levels is that I get really excited about a project or a goal, and if I run into road blocks or delays, my motivation greatly decreases. I need to start something and finish it ASAP, or else it turns into merely another thing on the list, whether it be writing a paper or saving the whales. This is something I need to work on, but now that I am aware that I have this tendency I will realize that my sudden lack of drive has nothing to do with the project itself, but with my own personality.

I would recommend this course to anyone that wants to change things, whether it be themselves, or the world they live in. I have learned so much that I know I don't even realize now, but I do realize that I am richer for having had this experience. I am so proud of the University of Kentucky for offering opportunities like this to its students. Programs like this need to be present at every university that wishes to consider itself great, and I hope that in the future my accomplishments will cause others to see this one as so also.