

Megan Sampson

It is hard to believe that the semester is already coming to a close. It just seems like yesterday that I got a letter about the Emerging Leader Institute in the mail. When I first thought about applying to the Emerging Leader Institute, I thought it would be a great chance to build on my leadership foundation. Looking back, not only has ELI given me the chance to become a stronger leader, but also ELI has given me the chance to become a better person and strengthen my people skills. Now as I move on, I plan to use all these lessons I've learned so I can be a successful leader and person.

As I reflect back on all the presentations, guest speakers, discussions, and hands-on activities, it is clear that ELI was a unique learning experience. I learned more in ELI than I would learn in a typical class. There are not very many classes that provide the opportunity for me to learn about myself. I am definitely a stronger person who is more accepting of others. Before this class, I had little experience dealing with a diverse group of people who have different personalities and opinions. Now, I am confident that I can work well with others. I didn't think I would work well with so many different types of people because in the past I always got frustrated when I had to work with different types of people. I would get upset when things weren't going my way or when we couldn't agree on things. ELI speakers and class discussions helped me find ways to work with other personalities without getting frustrated. The communications workshops taught me that there are ways to communicate in a group like our ELI class. I must remember to appreciate other viewpoints and use various types of listening.

When looking at different types of people, the communications workshops also helped me explore the different types of leaders. As a leader in high school I didn't like

having a variety of leaders in an organization. These workshops provided activities for me to work with others and I became more accepting of other leadership styles. As the class progressed I was able to apply my new skills when our leadership styles clashed. Even though I am not a fan of conflict, I was able to see why it is important to be accepting of others personalities and leadership styles. A perfect example of our personalities clashing was when the groups presented their ideas for the ELI community service project. When the class was trying to agree on a project, I saw tensions rise and I saw some act in a way I had never seen them act before. If it wasn't for our communications workshop I don't think I would have been as open to others. If this situation had taken place in high school, than I would have been very narrow-minded and not open to others ideas. Looking at what I learned, I feel I gained some very important leadership skills. However, I have also become a better person because I am more accepting of others and their values.

As soon as I started learning and understanding the new lessons I learned, I tried to apply them outside of ELI class. A good chance for me to gain experience using my new skills came when I was preparing the ELI Individual Leadership Project. My project was to educate children on the importance and characteristics of self-esteem. The project called for me to work with elementary school leaders such as counselors and principals. I had my own ideas on how I would implement my project, but I tried to keep an open mind as they presented their ideas. During the planning process, I became frustrated because I wasn't getting everything accomplished like I wanted to. I am a very focused leader who strives for perfectionism. It was hard for me to accept that the school officials I was working with were not like that. They were more laid-back, one step at a time

leaders. It was frustrating at first to accept, but then I had to realize that this was just the beginning of working with a variety of leaders, so I accepted their leadership style. I also referred back to class notes and remembered there are affective ways to communicate my feelings with them if I need to. After working on my community service project, I have come to realize just how impacting ELI has been on me. I was able to apply the lessons I learned in a real life situation that has given me much confidence as I start to work with more leaders outside of class.

The individual leadership project was a major lesson for me. I have experienced firsthand how differences in opinions and leadership styles affect me. I feel like I have become a stronger person as I have accepted and applied these leadership lessons. I will use the many lessons I learned throughout my life because there is room for me to grow as a person and a leader. I am so glad I filled out the application for ELI because I got to build on my leadership foundation but more importantly I learned how to be a stronger person.