

?“Congratulations! Today is your day. You’re off to great places, you’re off and away. You have brains in your head, you have feet in you shoes, you can steer yourself in any direction you choose. You’re on your own and you know what you know, and YOU are the guy who’ll decide where you go.”

Everyone who has the privilege to participate in Emerging Leaders Institute can probably say some aspect of ELI has forever changed our lives. I know that it has changed mine. Whether it be by seeing the residents sing “Amazing Grace” during our Big group project , baking huge cupcakes for a bake sale for my individual leadership project, or simply singing along in a music meditation to learn what life is like outside of our comfort zone in my peer mentor group, I know I have all been affected by the Emerging Leaders Institute. I’ve learned how to work as leaders but most importantly I’ve learned how to work with each other. I’ve learned how to work not only with my peers in ELI but also with the group I am working with on my individual leadership project.

“Be who you are and say what you feel because those who mind don’t matter and those who matter don’t mind.”

Throughout our time in this class we have learned to respect each other so much to the point where we can share ideas and thoughts freely without the fear of being criticized or put down. For me personally, I know I have learned that it’s okay to speak up without the fear of criticism which as an introvert who has not always been the most outspoken person, it has been a big step for me.

The same atmosphere I found was continued into our Mentor group. Our group was wonderful! We always encouraged each other in our leadership projects. Lance and Ryan both had activities that were really fun. One week we brought in a song that we liked and on the same day was when we discovered our comfort zones through the singing with the ?Gregorian? Chant. It was a very valuable and fun experience to work with the “orange” group.

“Unless someone like you cares a whole awful lot, nothing is going to be better, it’s not.”

For my individual leadership project I decided to have a bake sale in the students center in order to raise money for The Episcopal Diocese of Lexington’s Reading Camp. The Reading Camp is held every summer for underprivileged students who are behind in reading skills and who otherwise might not get to experience a week at summer camp. The money I raise, with the help of Intervarsity Christian Fellowship will go toward buying supplies for the camp. Although most of us will not get to see how they use the supplies we will be satisfied knowing that we had a small part in making it this best week of some child’s life. We met the Tuesday night before the bake sale and baked everything from “creamwiches” to cupcakes to brownies until 1:30 in the morning. We had the bake sale in the student center and made \$40.41 which I considered very good for a small bake sale:-) It was a very fun experience and I learned how many people actually walk through the student center on a given day.

One of my favorite parts of this class was that it offers the chance to make an impact on the world twenty-seven (including the group project) VERY different ways. I loved watching the presentations at the end and learning what everyone else had done. We had everything from sprucing up the Humane Society to building bridges to downtown Lexington. It was refreshing to

see that we could do it. There are not many classes offered that give a student a chance to change the world but I think I've been blessed to have this opportunity to do it.

“You'll get mixed up of course, as you already know. You'll get mixed up with many strange birds as you go. So be sure when you step, step with great care and tact, and remember that life is a great balancing act.”

A part of my leadership project was meeting and working with many different types of people. With the help of the Myers-Briggs test I learned that I have to adapt to different people's personalities. Not everyone needs plan ahead and have a schedule made up in their head. I HAVE to have a game plan at least told to me or else I get nervous and think that everything is going to fall through the cracks. But since I had the experience of working with different personality types

I have learned to adapt and work with different kinds of people. Not all of them are “strange birds” but I have worked with some pretty unique people during the year.

“Out there things can happen and frequently do, to people as brainy and as footsy as you. And when things start to happen don't worry don't stew, just go right along and you'll start happening too.”

As some of us have probably learned through our projects, things do not always go as we originally planned. Due to the great warm weather most of the Wal-Marts in Lexington were unavailable to host more than one group for car washes. As a group we had to improvise and decided that a bake sale would probably be the best alternative. Being flexible with the group you are helping is also a big part of it. My original plan was to host a dinner and have people bring a book for a ticket to the dinner. I soon learned that the directors of the reading camp had already thought of an idea similar and had more than enough books. Because of that I had to change what my plans were and work with them to see what THEY need. Now I've decided that the best solution is to just give them the money we made and let them buy what they see fit.

“You won't lag behind because you'll have the speed. You'll pass the whole gang and soon take the lead. Wherever you fly, you'll be the best of the best. Wherever you go, you'll top  
all the rest.”

With everything I have learned I am glad to say that I can share it with others by my leadership skills. It will be evident when we soon take leadership positions in our fraternities or sororities, in Student Government, and in the organizations we belong to. With what all I have learned from this class I will not only be better leader but also I will be able to deal with anything that comes my way as a leader.

“And will you succeed? Yes! You will indeed! (98 and 3/4% guaranteed). Kid you'll move mountains! So... be your name Buxbaum or Bixby or Bray, or Mordeci Ali Van Allen O'Shea, you're off to great places! Today is your day. Your mountain is waiting so get on your way!”

As “alumni” of Emerging Leaders Institute it is now up to us to move mountains. There are always going to be mountains for us to move in the future and now we have the valuable learning experience from Emerging Leaders Institute to help us.

(quotes by Dr. Seuss)

}i{ Katie Sigmon}i{

"May the road rise to meet you. May the wind be always at your back. May the sun shine warmly upon your face, and the rain fall softly on your fields. And until we meet again, may God keep you in the palm of his hand<><" ~Irish Blessing