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ELI FINAL PAPER

The Emerging Leader Institute was an amazing experience, allowing me to examine myself as a leader, peer, and person. Through the course, I was able to gain a new perspective of leadership while furthering my understanding of the dynamics behind being an effective leader. The most fulfilling experience to me was the class that focused on diversity issues in society. It was at that point that I realized how much we need to improve our relations between different cultures, especially on UK's campus. In addition, through labeling and recognizing the basic stereotypes that are associated with various types of ethnicities, it was interesting to see how people perceive each other and the lack of knowledge and understanding behind each one. This class had the most significant and profound impact on me because of my love and dedication to my community service toward Hispanics in our country. In fact, this passion was the driving force behind the formation of my ELI class project.

Following the ELI course, I plan to continue my service to the Lexington community and further my growth as a leader. I've learned that leadership is not only leading, but also knowing when to follow, and learning to respect the strengths and weaknesses of each individual. In addition, the class allowed me to see the many different ways that a group can form and utilize the strengths of all involved to create a successful and productive atmosphere conducive to learning.

The ELI class also gave me an opportunity to compare the person I was before the class began, and who I have become. I would say the most significant change is my understanding of others when it comes to effective and efficient group work. In the past, it was more difficult to relate to introverts because I tend to be more extraverted. I now understand, however, that it takes introverts longer to feel comfortable in a group setting and they sometimes feel overwhelmed by the "go-get-'em" attitude of the more gregarious types of people.

All of these realizations and more were extremely important throughout the course of completion of my ELI project. Firstly, it was incredibly important to plan and to organize my thoughts, my plan-of-action, and my goals. In addition, I learned that change doesn't occur overnight. This concept was the most difficult for me to accept because I sometimes get impatient and want instant gratification. Time, however, has been a blessing in disguise throughout my project because it gave me a chance to organize my thoughts and re-evaluate my goals and hopes. Through this, I was able to be more realistic and develop a project that was successful.

My project was the most valuable aspect of ELI. I was able to embrace my passion and utilize the freedom of creating a project that inspired me. I began, however, by targeting what I presumed to be the needs of the Hispanic population. The more I worked through my goals, however, the more I realized that asking the needs of the group is the first step to success.

My goals in regard to my project of improving American and Hispanic relations extended far beyond the conclusion of this course. I am thankful because ELI gave me the opportunity to examine my passion on a much closer level and to truly analyze my

aspirations. In addition, I am now able to more effectively state my specific long-term and short-term plans of action.

Overall, the Emerging Leader Institute was a wonderful opportunity to bring a group of young leaders together from the University of Kentucky who enjoyed sharing ideas, goals, dreams, and fears. This wasn't a typical class, rather, a comfort-zone and a "home away from home." The structure of the course was refreshing and it allowed me to feel more comfortable sharing my thoughts with others on a more personal level. It was understood immediately that the comments, experiences, and feelings shared in the class were to stay in the classroom. ELI was an opportunity to make life-long friends that I will continue to communicate with and utilize as a source of inspiration and support throughout my college experience. Most of all, ELI was a place that taught me that each of us has qualities that set us apart from others. I grew to admire and respect the traits of each person in the class. Everyone was so special and unique in his or her own way and each inspired me to follow my dreams. I can't articulate how important the ELI experience has been for me. I will never forget, however, the friendships, bonds, and laughter formed in a single semester. ELI was a wonderful experience and I wouldn't trade it for the world.