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ELI
Final Summary Paper

My ELI Experience

Thinking back to when I first came and met with my ELI classmates in early January, I can honestly say that I have become a whole different person from the ELI experience. I have learned to become a better communicator, better listener, to respect others and their opinions. I feel as if I am better overall person and I believe by the skills I learned through ELI I am able to lead those who look up to me for leadership. Most importantly I believe I have become a better asset to my friends, professors, teammates and the entire population here at the University of Kentucky.

My most memorable experience in ELI that stood out to me was my community project. The project really opened my eyes to the real world and proved to me that anything was possible if you really put your heart into it. When I got the community project I wasn't sure really what direction to head. To be honest, I was distraught and remember saying to one of my team members Katie Hollrah "This is going to be impossible!" Most college kids have that feeling or don't have to motivation to do a large task due to the fact that it maybe "too hard", "too time consuming", etc. At the beginning of ELI, I definitely was in this category of kids.

Through ELI I witnessed many great guest speakers. They often talked about topics such as organizing time, self confidence, how to deal with conflict within the group, diversity, dealing with stress, having a impact on your community were some that stuck out in my head. These presentations not only helped me gain confidence and ideas for my community project, but they also helped me realize that I needed to become a better listener, have more confidence in myself, and to be more sociable. I started to notice the tendencies that I often have of nodding off in the middle of a conversation if it didn't interest me. When talking about basketball, girls, tests I often think negatively. I often state "My shot is off, I can't shoot anymore, I have no shot with her, I am going to fail" etc. Nodding off in the middle of a conversation shows a great deal of disrespect towards a person and talking negatively is just setting me up for failure and I go into the situation with a low mood even before I try.

Through the presentations and in class activities I have developed into a leader in feeling more confident in talking to people and really understanding on how they feel. The activities taught me how to listen and understand certain real life situations and how people may feel or perceive me at certain times. I believe this is important in any team or even just talking to a friend one on one. I feel I am able to be there for someone which a leader always should be.

I also noticed a gradual change in my outlook towards things I would often look at with a negative outlook. When playing basketball I felt more confident with my playing ability and just told myself to focus on the next play. I guess its a college guy thing, but I am really interested in finding that certain someone and I have slowly started to come out of my shell and have confidence when talk to a girl. One thing I am most happy about is that I am confident when it comes to test taking. Taking tests especially in college had always been a fear of mine, but I believe a lot had to do with my negative attitude. The positive atmosphere I was experiencing in class carried over to my community project.

For my community project I wanted to do something that really would mean something to me and not just do something to say that I did it. I decided it would be a good idea to say thank you to the UK and Lexington Urban County police officers for their time and efforts they put in to fighting crime and to make our campus a safe place. My dad is a police officer in Kalamazoo, Michigan and I have seen the daily stresses a police officer goes through daily. Saying thank you to the officers at the halftime of a UK basketball game and inviting them for a post game sub and soda I thought would be vary appropriate. This way the college kids themselves could give a thanks the officers rarely get from the students and the people in attendance could give them their appreciation and warm thank you.

My social skills and confidence skills would be put to the test to pull this one off. I also had to step outside my comfort zone to make contacts to make the project happen. It is often intimidating for a college student to go out into the community and make contacts within the business world. I made contact with UK president Lee Todd's staff on the proposed idea and I informed both police departments to inform them of the project and to give some details to what I plan to do with it. The individuals I made contact with were very nice and helpful and even though my project hasn't gotten off the ground quite yet, I feel confident that the contacts made will help me to get my project off the ground.

The community project made me realize that contacts are essential in the business world. Without them it is going to be very difficult to accomplish anything on your own. It is important that you are social and carry business ethics when making contacts with these people so that they get a first impression of you and second, they are going to be more likely to recommend others and help if you ever needed it in the future. People are often hard to get a hold of due to busy schedules, therefore a project or planning a event such as this often seems to be impossible. The best thing you can do is keep your head up and keep grinding at it. If its in your heart, you are able to accomplish anything.

I believe the contacts that I made through this project can help me down the road in future goals. I am very interested in working with the FBI or the CIA and the contacts within the police forces might be able to land me with other possible connections in higher law enforcement agencies. President Todd might be able to write a future recommendation after witnessing my hard work and professionalism. Both contacts could help me get to that next step in my career path in the future.

My presentation on my community project was very important to me. I wanted to do my best presenting my project and those officers I was representing. Again, there was a test in my confidence and social skills. I love being in the spotlight and in front of people, but I often feel nervous or unsure of myself and how others would perceive my presentation. In this presentation I felt as though I was more confident and ready to present than I have ever been for anything before. I'll admit that I was shaking and made the comment to Rachel, "Man I am nervous". My slideshow presentation went extremely well. I was able to throw off the jitter bugs and confidently share my project with others in the class. I think working in small groups and being able to get to know a few of the students with previous interaction really made the whole presentation have a more comfortable feel to it. Not only was I confident in presenting the information but the social aspect came to play a big role. I was able to get class interaction through the telling of personal experiences of the project. The class wanted to know a lot about my father, his job and they gave me positive feedback on how I could make the Lexington community better. I thought this was really cool as the class listened, gave me their full respect and took my project on a personal level.

The presentation was a huge stepping stone for me. In the future I am going to have to give a number of presentations whether in the FBI, CIA or informing my passengers on the flight status, or if my dream comes true addressing a state on current issues faced and how the state government plans to take care of those issues. The presentation really taught me how to get into interact with a large group of people and how important it is to be confident in the information you are giving. No one wants to hear someone who is indecisive or acts unprofessional. I plan to take these skills I learned from this presentation and use them on future presentations which I am confident now will go extremely well.

Besides all the learning about myself and becoming a better person with skills practiced in class I became really close with the members of ELI. Throughout the year everyone has motivated one another when working on assignments, participating in a group activity or when giving presentations. Positive feedback was often shared by means of verbal communications such as a simple "you can do it" or a "good luck". Non verbal feedback came in the means of a smile or a friendly hello while in the classroom. These types of communication make the classroom and business setting feel more comfortable to everyone around them. As we learned, more can be achieved and there is going to be less conflict in the work setting. It was really nice to come to class everyday and know that the class was behind you 110%.

I have learned a lot from ELI and the talented people who are involved with it. I plan to stay in close contact with each and every member. The members of the class seem to be almost like a family to me. I hope to take these experiences and memories and put them to work so I can achieve my ultimate goals. Each and every member has had an influence on my future work ethic and the person I am as I enter my Junior year here at UK. This influence will make me better prepared for law school or the flight career path I choose to take. It has been certainly been a great semester and I am anxious for to see what our futures hold for us!