

# A New Chapter

Brent Ocker

E.L.I. Spring 2005

I can still remember my first visit to Larry A. Ryle High School in Union, Kentucky. Its appearance came no where close to rivaling my former school, it being a mere two story facility as opposed to the five I had recently left. It of course looked more modern thanks to its not even ten year old construction. The student enrollment was also a tad bit under my previous school as well, lacking about four thousand extra students. By the way, I am hoping you could sense that sarcasm. To say the least, I was not excited about my new undertaking. Attending a new school would be hard enough, however starting over in the middle of my high school years and leaving my family and the only friends I had ever known would be I thought, unbearable. Nevertheless, as I sit here, four years removed from that beginning, I have begun a new chapter at another new school, the University of Kentucky.

Attending the University of Kentucky was not even on my radar through the first seventeen years of my life. Up until then my choices were down to a solid, unbreakable three: they were Florida State, Louisiana State, or Missouri, but never UK. The first two choices were for the extremely prestigious baseball programs, as I had always dreamed of putting on one of their uniforms and playing, while the other was out of born and breed loyalty to the state from which I came. But as my senior year came and past and circumstances arose that would not let me live those early aspirations, my focus shifted onto becoming a

Kentucky Wildcat.

My experience in the Emerging Leader Institute has been one that I will remember and cherish for many years to come. However, even from the very beginning I began to wonder how much this class would actually aid me. I had taken UK 101 the previous semester and, although the material would obviously vary significantly, I assumed that since they were both a Pass/Fail course their level of required energy would be similar, meaning none to barely any. That's not to say I did not have a tremendous sense of excitement and pride regarding my selection. Coming from an extremely successful family I wanted to use UK to help separate myself and establish my own sense of accomplishment, and I felt that acceptance into E.L.I. would allow me to start that.

It was my advisor who actually introduced the idea of E.L.I. to me, and to be correct, not really to me but my mom. I had gone to take the Spanish Placement Exam and upon my return my mother and advisor, Mrs. Edgerton, were discussing the class. She thought it would be worth a try for me to turn in an application come next spring, seeing how I was a political science major she deemed it would do no harm to at least try. Nevertheless as the spring semester approached I nearly forgot about E.L.I.. As I had just finished having lunch at the Student Center I happen to pass a fallen flier for the course lying on the ground. It had totally slipped my mind and had I not seen that brochure on the tile floor I might never have turned in an application. It was tremendous act of fate in not only stumbling across the brochure, but also because I never eat at the Student

Center and why on that day I chose to I will never know.

When starting this class I had figured I was a pretty good leader. I had led numerous activities in the past, all being successful, and felt that this class would only hone those skills. I felt very confident entering this course with not only my abilities but my styles and methods of leadership as well. This class though gave me a whole new sense and understanding of what a leader really was. It really opened my eyes to the fact that although I might have had a good start on being a leader, I still had a tremendous road left to travel.

So many speakers left lasting impressions with not only me but the entire class that it would be too difficult to concern myself with them all in this paper. Everyone of them provided invaluable lessons to which I am extremely grateful for. Nonetheless, there were still a few that stuck out a little more than others.

Dr. Gordon Holbein got my attention first with his three types of leaders.

Successful: gets job done, efficient

Good: uplifts, builds people, positive, role model

Effective: encompasses both successful and good leaders as one

When hearing that I immediately knew I was simply a successful leader. Since then, in any task I undertake, I now strive to become an effective leader and accomplish both kinds of leadership.

Also, Dr. Steven Voss stood out tremendously with his challenge the process style of message. He encouraged us to think more in depth and to discover the truths within the problems we encounter. His conversations were much more blunt and to the point than some speakers. Not to say the others

were bad, but I feel like Dr. Voss had a more difficult topic (Credibility) and needed to address it in such a manor.

The last speaker that really impressed me was Dr. Bill Maloney. I think I could speak for the entire class when I say that he was one of our more favorite guests. His topic of rewards and celebrating success was very enjoyable and entertaining. He really brought forth the importance of learning how and when to reward your team and to relish your success. Furthermore, when needing to deliver his point he did so in a professional manner, although he knew how to keep the class challenged and involved with his discussion.

Most importantly, I learned that leadership is not a position or a title. It is not something that you win or receive. Being a leader is someone who does not order someone to do something, yet joins them in doing that something. A leader is someone who takes far less than the credit deserved and far more than blame deserved. I learned that upon my completion of E.L.I., my duties lay not in going out to lead followers, but to go out and make more leaders.

Lastly, playing a huge part in this class for me were the two instructors, Jared and Angel. Both of them brought vast amounts of knowledge and experience to the table, and I can not imagine a better duo to teach this course. To me Angel displayed the type of aggressive, challenge the process leadership that I feel I have as well. She always encouraged us to get involved with groups and activities, and to share our voice with others. On the other hand, Jared reminds me of none other than my Father. He was always professional and

accepting of others opinions. However, he also invited us to think deeper and defend our views, never allowing us to escape a generic answer. Also, Jared made me realize that 5:30 in the morning is a lot earlier than I remember, and to start thinking of retirement because I am too old to get up that soon.

In conclusion, E.L.I. has taught so many things I could not possibly type all of them on this paper. The messages each class period, the speakers, the teachers and mentors, and my classmates all contributed to some piece, no matter how big or small, that I will take from this experience. The new techniques and methods though are not all I will take from this class. I not only learned this semester, but made twenty-five new friends that I will take with me wherever it is I may go. The ideas I learned will last as long as the task at hand needs them, but the friendships made will last forever. The Spring 2005 Emerging Leaders Institute helped me to establish a foundation for years to come that will not only aid me in my years at Kentucky, but for future endeavors as well.