

My Leadership Experience

The Emerging Leader Institute has been among the best classes I have ever taken. Not only did I learn a great deal about the outside world from this class, but I learned a lot about myself as an individual and realized there is more to me than I had previously thought.

Coming into the Emerging Leader Institute, I didn't know what to expect. I had heard from people in previous classes that the class was not enjoyable and that it was long and dragged out. I also heard there was new hope for the class though because it would now be under the new leadership of Angel Lee and Jared Tippets. I decided to give the class a shot. In my UK101 class, we did a leadership seminar in the student activities office and Jared was in charge of presenting to the classes that attended. He seemed like a really cool guy who was very engaging. He was young, upbeat, and really knew how to interact with students. He easily could have been mistaken for a college student. He led our seminar and kept everyone's attention for the whole 50 minutes. At the end of his presentation he mentioned the Emerging Leader Institute and what it consisted of. It caught my attention. By the time the 50 minute presentation was over, the room had cleared out fast, just how any other classroom would at the 50 minute mark. I remember being the only one to stick around to ask Jared about his class. He made me feel like I was the only person in the room of any importance and gave me the application to fill out. I didn't know how good my chances were of getting in the class. From what I had heard, it seemed to be a class mainly composed of Greeks. Since I was not Greek at

the time, I thought my chances of getting in the class would be slim. I decided to fill out the application anyways, and before I knew it, I came home one day after class and there was a message on my answering machine saying I had been accepted into the class. It made my day! I called my parents and was bragging to them of my accomplishment. I had already felt like a great leader because of this accomplishment.

After Christmas break, the class started up. Immediately at orientation I was able to read and study how the other members of my class interacted. Before coming into the class I was over-confident and was thinking that I would be the most outgoing leader in the class. My dreams were shattered as soon as I realized how much more outgoing the other members of my class were. I learned that day that I was a bit shy than I had previously thought and that I am not the type of person who is going to speak out in front of a large group of people that I didn't know. It made me nervous to not be the one in the spotlight. Throughout high school I was always running for student council, was always involved in many clubs and considered myself to be well-known. I didn't know how I would react to not being the center of attention anymore.

When the class started up, I learned that there are different types of leaders, leaders who listen more than they speak-out. This type of leadership was new to me but it was one that I experimented with throughout the semester and one that grew on me really fast. With everyone in the class being so outgoing, I figured I would be the one in the class to study their interactions and to learn from them. At times I was worried because I felt that because I was so quiet, Jared and Angel would think that I wasn't interested in their class or that I wasn't participating enough. I stuck with my new style of leadership anyways and that's the way I was the rest of the semester. I had once heard

that Vice President Dick Cheney, one of my favorite leaders, also portrayed this style of leadership. Watching the Vice-Presidential debates, I found this to be true. Throughout the debates, he stayed calm and cool, even when being slammed by his opponent. When it was his turn to speak, he spoke the truth, came back with responses that only a very intelligent man would come up with, and never appeared to be caught off guard. He depicted himself as the type of leader who listens and learns from others rather than being the outspoken leader that always is the first to yell, the first to speak out, and often times the first to be wrong. Mark Twain once said, "It is better to be silent and be thought a fool, than to open your mouth and erase all doubt."

During this semester, I decided to pledge a fraternity. This took up a lot of time for me but at the same time made me feel that I was getting involved in my school even more. It was very interesting for me because in the same semester, I had been a non-Greek, and then a Greek. I got a feel for the class from both sides of the spectrum. When I decided to go Greek, I could tell there were certain members in the class who may have not agreed with my decision and now looked at me in a different light. This would be a test for me now. Even though I was going Greek, I knew the whole time that the last thing I would ever want to do is treat people who weren't Greek differently than those who were Greek. It still hurt to hear members of the class mention to other members of the class events that would be going on throughout campus but would be for Greeks only. Many times I wish I could have been outside of the room when this was happening because it made me feel very uncomfortable. I decided in this class that even though I joined a fraternity, I would never exclude my friends and my class mates from certain activities, and if the activity my fraternity was holding was for Greeks only, I would not

mention the event in class in front of non-Greeks... period. I have never been one to exclude others from activities. Joining a fraternity was sometimes hard for me because I did realize how exclusive the groups are and it made me uncomfortable at times because I could tell that people viewed me differently now.

If anything, I learned to be more caring of others in the class. I always tried to be friendly, never went out of my way to cut anyone down, and always stood up for what I believed in, even if I was the only one in the class who felt this way. One of the greatest lessons I learned from ELI was to reward others who show exemplary work. Dr. Bill Maloney taught us many great lessons, but this was one of the lessons that really stood out in my mind. I had been a leader my whole life, but realized from Dr. Bill Maloney that day that I had never rewarded those who were close to me and never rewarded those who helped to get where I was. Looking back on all of my past experiences where I was in situations where I was not a leader and where I had helped others to become leaders, I remembered always being rewarded for the great things that I had done. It made me remember how motivated I was to go beyond what was asked of me just because I knew that someone viewed me as standing out above all of the rest.

One of the greatest and simplest rewards I received all semester was being recognized by my class mates for coming up with a very basic idea, one in which seemed too basic to me, but so brilliant to all of the other members of my group. In the activity, Jared and Angel assigned us to come up with a school activity that we could do under a tight budget. Our group was assigned to come up with the activity and present it to the class, all the while making sure that the activity would be within budget and would not cost too much money. The activity that I came up with was an idea called "Keeneland

Days.” My idea was to have one day during one of the weekends that Keeneland Race Tracks were open, and we would provide busses to students to get out to the race tracks, and then while at the race tracks we would have a school sponsored tailgate for everyone. For some reason, the idea clicked into my head so fast and I just spit it out to my group. This was very unlike me, but I will never forget the looks on their faces as if I was some sort of genius who just came up with a cure for cancer. Everyone congratulated me on my “brilliant” idea and made me feel like I was the smartest kid in the classroom. When Jared and Angel asked us to present our ideas, one of my group members presented for our group, but gave me 100% of the credit for our idea. In front of the whole class, she praised me on how fast I came up with the idea and told the class how great of an idea I had come up with. It made me feel like a million bucks! The feeling I got from simply being recognized in a class of 25, is a feeling like no other. This feeling makes your day and makes you feel special about who you are. You leave the room feeling like somebody of importance and somebody who stands out above all of the rest.

In the days lying ahead, I will come across great obstacles and great triumphs. When things seem to be going my way, I will hit bumps in the road setting me back a step. When things may not be going my way, I may find ways to get myself back on the right track. From ELI, I learned to always stand out above the rest no matter what may be going on. As a leader, people will always be looking to me for guidance and wisdom. A leader is not just leading in certain times when people are in need, but instead a leader is leading at all times whether he/she is being called upon or not. This class has taught me so much about myself and others. I am glad that I took this great opportunity to be a part of the Emerging Leadership Institute at the University of Kentucky. The people that

I have met, and the skills that I learned, are things I will take with me throughout the rest of my college years and into my life after graduation. Thank you to Jared and Angel for this once in a lifetime experience.