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ELI

Final Paper

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ELI this semester has opened me up to so many new things. I have been put in positions that have forced me to go out of my comfort circle. I have experienced so many things that I could have never imagined experiencing my first year in college. I have had leadership experiences in the past but nothing can even compare to the kinds of lessons I have learned this past semester. ELI has been a huge part of learning these lessons. I have come out with many friendships that I never would have had, and I learned about myself both as a friend and as a leader. Overall, this class has made me grow as a person and I am so thankful for that.

There are many things that went into my learning process from this class. The first thing was my individual project. It started as a project in which I thought would be very easy to do. My proposal was to put mile markers up in the arboretum. I came across many difficulties that I was forced to work through. Although the process is ongoing, I learned a lot from everything that I had to go through. It ended up being one of the most stressful projects I have ever worked on because I felt like nothing went the way I had planned on it going.

In the beginning I thought it would be a good idea to do something pertaining to exercise considering that is what I want to do for the rest of my life. I aspire to be a physical therapist. My mentor group and I came up with the idea to put the mile markers

up in the arboretum. I thought this would be an easy way to incorporate my passion for exercise and the idea to do something for the campus of UK together. I did not know that I would run into so many problems. I had all of my difficulties in communication with the people that I needed to get in touch with. For example, the dean of students was the first person that I had to come in contact with. Well for about two weeks he was not able to be reached. This was very frustrating considering I wanted to get my project off on the right foot and I could not do that. When I finally got a hold of him, he gave me the correct people to come in contact with. I finally spoke with the person that I needed to in order to get the project rolling, or so I thought. There were even more communication problems there.

In the end, what I learned from this whole process is that communication is a big deal. If you have no one to communicate your vision to, you can not do anything. Going along with that idea, it is impossible to do a project like this one by yourself. I needed to know the right people in order to achieve what I wanted to do. I also learned that sometimes I am going to have to be a bit pushy, whether I like it or not, in order to get things done. I tend to be more of a shy person and I usually do not want to be a burden, but sometimes you have to be. That is what I mainly learned about myself from this individual project.

The best experience that I had in ELI was our group project. I took so much from it. The project with the Bluegrass Autism Society was one of the more difficult projects that were proposed to the class. This is mainly because it was dealing with children with disabilities. These children were all at different levels too, so it was impossible to know exactly what their needs were. This gave our class a challenge. I feel that this was

important and it forced our class to bond. We had many obstacles that we had to overcome, but we got through it as a class, and the project eventually was a complete success.

When the day finally came, it was so rewarding to see each of the children playing at the Lexington gymnastics center. We all had our moments, and it was something that brought the class closer than could have ever been imagined. This project also made me realize that what I want to do for the rest of my life really is what I want to do. Since I intend to become a pediatric physical therapist, it was nice to work with children with disabilities because this is mainly what they have to work with. My favorite part of the day was seeing the children's faces as they made friends with all of the students in ELI. Ariel, a child that is not Autistic, said something to me that really stuck with me. She asked me "Do you want to be a therapist?" I told her I did and asked her how she knew. She responded by saying "I knew that because you are working with autistic kids". This is what stuck with me because she was right about me wanting to become a therapist.

I feel that I learned most of the lessons that I learned in this class from those children. They taught me how important happiness is. These kids were so happy to just be playing around in a foam pit. They had no worries and here I am with all of these stresses. Sometimes you forget about the important things in life. I woke up that morning extremely tired and complaining about it. By the end of the day I had the biggest smile on my face because I had such a good time playing with little kids. Most of the time, the children with disabilities are the ones who appreciate life the most. They do not worry

about things that people without disabilities worry about. Everyone could learn a lot from those children.

The class time in general also taught me a lot about myself. There were many speakers that came in and discussed the meaning of leadership to our class. The one that sticks out the most was the woman who brought in the D.I.S.C. survey. I learned a lot about myself as both a leader and a person because of this. I ended up being a “counselor”. The criteria for this fit me almost perfectly. It showed that I was more of a behind the scenes person and I work well with people. This is very true; I constantly have to be interacting with people in order to be happy. This is why it is so important that I have a job in which I get to deal with people all the time. There is no way that I could have a job where all I would do is sit back behind a desk and have no interaction with people.

The class also taught me all of the things I need to work on as a leader too. We learned about so many leadership styles, many of which are very different from mine. I learned that there is no right way to lead, all of the styles work in different situations, but the more traits one possesses, the better of a leader the person will become. I am more the shy type of leader, but I have charisma. One thing I need to work on though is to be more aggressive when trying to achieve the things I need to achieve. I tend to be a person that is in the background and I usually do not speak my mind, even on matters that are important to me.

The people in the class are what made this class so enjoyable and they are the reasons why I got so much out of this class. Each and every person in the class taught me something about myself, my leadership style and how to change myself for the better. I

also learned that there are so many different types of leadership, and I think they were all present in our class. We had our quiet people, our loud people, our aggressive people and our passive people. In the beginning of this class, I would have thought that all these different personalities would clash but in fact once we came together, we meshed very well. Our class taught me that it was OK to open up and come out of my shell. This is something that generally is hard for me, but once I do, people can get the best of me. I owe much thanks to the people in our class and I have made wonderful friendships to last a lifetime.

Like the class, my mentor group showed me much of the same things. I learned so much from them. We also were an extremely compatible group; we all became very good friends. I learned that I work better in smaller settings because of how much more open I was in front of that small group of people. It is important to point out our mentor's personal project. This was kind of a joke in our group. Dr. Lee Edgerton's project was to stop our group from using the word "like" when it is in the wrong context. I feel that his project was a complete success considering I was the one that needed the most work. I know this was a success because this very evening when I was stating what I gained from ELI at our banquet, I did not use the word "like" one time. Congratulations to Dr. Edgerton on a successful project! This was just one of the fun things that our mentor group did that made the time with them so rewarding.

As the class comes to an end, it is so interesting to see how much I have changed as a person, and how much I gained from this class. Thanks to my class, my mentor group and especially Jared and Angel, I learned that there are so many ways to be a leader, and sometimes it is alright to be aggressive. This class has influenced me now to

go on to greater things. For example, I will be participating in the leadership summit which will just add onto my growing leadership skills. This class was my foundation and now I can take what I learned and put it into everything I do. I am so grateful that this opportunity was possible for me because it truly has changed my life for the better.