

CONTENTS

1. Introduction
2. Class lessons
3. My philosophy on leadership
4. Conclusion

INTRODUCTION

I strongly believe that anyone who considers themselves a leader should get involved in an experience similar to the Emerging Leader Institute. Not only is it an opportunity to learn about yourself and your leadership styles, but you also get to interact with other leaders who end up being some of your best friends. Being exposed to different types of leadership helps you to discover who you are as a leader and who you want to be. The Emerging Leader Institute has done just that for me. Because of this experience, I have developed my own personal philosophy on leadership. I hope that others will use parts of my perspective when deciding their own viewpoints on leadership as well.

Being involved in the Emerging Leader Institute has been a life-altering experience. It has not really changed who I am, but it has brought out qualities that I have always had deep inside. Whether it was taking a personality test, listening to guest speakers, or going out in the community and doing an individual service project, there were many times throughout the semester when I just sat there and thought, "Wow, I never realized that about myself before." It

was like a light bulb turned on in my head and I was getting closer to determining my place at the University of Kentucky and in the world.

CLASS LESSONS

There were so many important aspects of leadership taught to us this semester that it is difficult to remember every detail. Each speaker brought new and unique characteristics of what they believe leadership is; some of those characteristics are pieces of my own beliefs on leadership. If nothing else, these aspects are what I will carry with me not only in leadership, but in everyday living for the rest of my life. I strongly believe that these characteristics will be influential to others as they work on becoming great leaders.

Our first guest speaker was Wynn Stephens who talked to us about diversity. He used the analogy of a person being similar to an iceberg. It is important to remember that just like you can only see the top part of an iceberg, you only know that much about a person at first. In order to be an affective leader, you must try to find out what is beneath the surface and learn more about people. This is crucial in leadership because you want to develop quality relationships with those you are working with and leading because it helps to accomplish your goals. I have learned how important good relationships are firsthand. Not only developing relationships with people, but simply being respectful and nice to others really helps as well. It is inevitable that road blocks will come up in whatever you are doing. It is nice to know you have support backing you so that you can jump over any obstacles that come your way. Along with building relationships, I have learned how important it is to recognize those who help me in the process of whatever I am doing. When someone helps you, and you show your appreciation, they will be more likely to

help you again in the future. This is imperative when leading because you are demonstrating how to work with other people, and be more successful in leading.

One of the biggest issues I had trouble with in this class was stepping outside of my comfort zone. Dr. Lance Brunner talked to us about stepping out of the circle you've always lived in and taking risks. You have to take risks to make anything happen, even if you don't feel comfortable doing it. It is easy to sit there and say this and that need to be done, but in order to be a leader you must actually take action, even if you are not comfortable doing it. Not only will you accomplish more of your goals, but taking risks makes your life more adventurous and fun. Many people don't feel comfortable with picking up the phone and calling random people to ask them for something. From my experience, I learned that it really is not that bad. As long as you are respectful and sincere, the person you are talking to will at least be nice back most of the time. Even if they aren't, you tried and will just have to try again some other way. The worst that happens is that they say no, and after that you just have to find a way to adjust and keep moving forward.

One of the most important characteristics of a leader is to be flexible and willing to accept change. This semester I decided to organize an event, and I would not have been nearly as successful if I wasn't willing to just let it run its course the way it was supposed to. You cannot control everything, and you need to be able to use what you do have to your advantage. Don't get discouraged if everything doesn't go exactly how you imagined it would. If you do, then you will never be satisfied with what you do. Just because everything wasn't perfect doesn't mean that it was a failure. If you do consider something a failure, learn from it so you don't make the same mistakes again next time. That is what a leader does. They don't let anything stop them; they look at what they have done and use it to improve on future challenges.

The most influential speaker we had this semester was Dr. Dorothy Edwards. She said that one thing we had to take away from her presentation was to be passionate about whatever it is that you are doing. She used the term “fire in your belly”. That was one of those moments when the light bulb turned on in my head. I realized that a good leader is passionate about everything they do, and that is why they are effective leaders. When you are passionate and really care about your cause, whether it is an organization, work, or a community, you will make a bigger difference by letting your passion out and sharing it with others.

Dr. Edwards also told us something else that I strongly believe that every leader needs to consider. This is one of the most important lessons that I learned in this class because it was a personal issue for me and one that I had never really thought about. She told us that even though it is goofy to have that passion for whatever you are doing, you don't want it to get too personal where it starts to affect your ego. She used a soda can as an example of having your passion attached to you, and then putting it down and stepping away from it. I realized that even though it is good being passionate about what you're doing or who you are doing it for, it is also important to realize that you aren't doing it for *you*. You are not the purpose of your project or your goal. The only thing that should really matter is the accomplishments you have at the end that are beneficial to others. This is something that I have struggled with my entire life, but no one had said anything about it to make me realize what I was doing. Because I have always been passionate about everything I do, I would take criticism very personally. I always wanted to be the best, and if something went wrong I would see that as being a fault in myself. After Dr. Edwards talked to us, I took myself out of the picture and truly understood what she meant. A good leader doesn't lead others for their personal benefit; it is for the advantage of society as a whole. When you do this, you are a more affective leader and it is easier to accomplish your

goals. I can personally say that it helps because I don't take criticism as personally and I don't get as stressed out if everything doesn't go perfectly as I planned.

MY PHILOSOPHY ON LEADERSHIP

The idea of leadership is so broad that you can't really put a textbook definition on the term. Each individual has to define it in their own way according to their personal beliefs on leadership. My philosophy on leadership is simply what I try to define leadership as, and what I strive to be like as a leader. It helps to be organized, manage your time well, and all of those qualities that you are taught in school. I think that in order to be an affective leader you must express your values to those around you. You have to be passionate about what you are doing and be willing to take risks to encourage change. I used to define leadership as setting an example for others to follow. However, it is more than that. You have to influence others to be leaders as well. If I could sum up my definition of leadership in one sentence, it would be the influence of others to take actions and encourage them to be leaders.

CONCLUSION

I think that everyone should have an experience such as this because it was one of the most influential ones of my life. Before the Emerging Leader Institute, I was not happy with my life at the University of Kentucky. Since this experience, I have made my place at UK and discovered who I really am and how I want my college experience to be. This experience has opened the door to so many opportunities for me to partake in the future. It has completely changed my life for the better and I would never take it back. I have made some of my best friends in this class. These are people that I know I can depend on in the future, and I will also be

there for them if they ever need it. I am honored to be apart of the Emerging Leader Institute. It has exceeded any of my expectations by far. The University of Kentucky is fortunate to have this program to develop strong leaders to better the university. I am truly sad that it has come to an end for me, but I will continue the legacy of this institution in the future.