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ELI

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Becoming the Perfect ELI Student

The experience that the Emerging Leader Institute has provided me is unlike any college experience I have had. The nontraditional class environment has been a great experience for me. Although we were taught by a book, the way ELI was taught was what made it for me. I enjoyed the way that we were able to talk in an open circle. Often, it is hard for students to get that experience in a real class, because we are not “put on the spot” like we often are in ELI.

Beginning with the orientation meeting, ELI ***forced*** me to do something that I do not enjoy. Stepping out of my comfort zone! For those of you that know me, I know that you all are having a hard time believing this, but I hate stepping out of my box. At orientation, I really thought, oh my gosh, is this how it is going to be, standing up saying, my name is Nicholas Zellich, and the three items I brought was: NUTS! The Story of Southwest Airlines, a pair of goggles, and my iPod. But after orientation, I quickly realized Jared and Angel had strategically planned these activities so that we would be able to get to know one another. I have never been able to become such great friends, as I have been able to with my ELI classmates. We all know each other, very well. One aspect of the ELI class that I particularly liked was the opportunity for the peer mentor group. The peer mentor group helps all students get to know a certain set of individuals as well as two mentors who are there to support you in all of your ELI

endeavors. I am grateful that Jared and Angel had us step out of our box, because it has allowed me to make friends that I never would have otherwise been able to make.

ELI was structured where students were presented with guest speakers throughout the course of the semester. Overall, there were three guest speakers that really “stick out” in my mind. My favorite guest speaker, hands down was Dr. Gordon Holdbein from the school of Management. Dr. Holdbein spoke to us at the beginning of the semester about, the five practices of an exemplary leadership. This is where I begin to define what my philosophy on leadership. The five practices of an exemplary leader are as follows:

1. **Model the Way:** As leaders we must first exemplify the leadership behaviors that we expect out of others. If we expect our employees to show up at time and being ready for the day’s work, we should start by doing this ourselves. We as leaders must also discuss our ethical values with others, so that they know the way that we handle activities.
2. **Inspire A Shared Vision:** According to Kouzes and Posner, Leaders have a desire to make something happen, to change the way things are, to create something that no else has ever done before. I find this sentence very important, because as leaders we are taught that we should be setting the example and striving for excellence in everything that we do. I think most importantly that we should “model the way” for other leaders so that they can achieve great things, if they see us doing something, hopefully it will encourage them to do other great things.

3. **Challenge the Process:** Leaders venture out of their comfort zone to get things accomplished. We should research for opportunities to change, grow, and improve our organizations for their future benefit. We can not expect people to come to us with ideas, we must get out and “challenge the process” to get things achieved. Also by challenging the process, we must be willing to take risks because, if we don’t take risks we never know whats going to happen. Think about some of the greatest risk taking stories—Southwest Airlines, Dell Computer Company, and Wal-Mart are all examples of companies that took risks, and are now Fortune 500 Companies.
4. **Enable Others to Act:** As leaders we must also recruit the use of others so that we are not doing everything by ourselves. The number one key to leadership is delegation. We must collaborate with other individuals to see that we get the project done. Whether that means, making a phone call, to encourage that person or what.
5. **Encourage the Heart:** It is very important that we reward and recognize individuals for their hard work with us. Research indicates that most individuals would much rather receive a public recognition as opposed to a monetary gift. By celebrating and rewarding individuals for their hard work, we are ultimately promoting team spirit and unity which will encourage others to work harder so that they may potential be recognized.

The second presentation that sticks out in my mind for importance was by, Dr. Dorthy Edwards, director of Women's Place on campus. Dr. Edwards spoke to us about how important it is in fostering collaboration to get things accomplished. At the point in the semester when she presented, I was having a hard time getting people to help me in my individual leadership project. Dr. Edwards explained to us the troubles that she has had personally in starting an awareness project on UK's campus for violence against violence. She explained that it was often a "touchy" topic with most individuals and told us how she had a hard time collaborating with individuals to get things accomplished. Most importantly she said you must have the "fire in the belly" or the drive to achieve the what some people call impossible.

As leaders it is important that we understand that collaboration improves performance. If we collaborate with someone to get something done than generally the ending product is going to be amazing. According to Kouzes and Posner to foster collaboration efficiently, leaders must be able to:

1. Create a Climate of Trust
2. Facilitate positive interdependence
3. Support Face to Face interactions

If we successfully implement all of these three ideas than we are sure to have a collaboration that will improve performance.

Finally, the most important thing besides delegation that a leader must be able to do is understand others. We experienced this in the DiSC Personal Profile. DiSC stands for a different leadership style. D is dominance, I is influence, S is steadiness, and C is conscientiousness. It is important that we understand the people that we are

working with because if we place them with someone who their leadership style clashes with then we are potentially taking a risk because the two will not work together. For example, I am an ID person, meaning I am a dominant influencer. This means that I need to work with someone who concentrates on the task, speaks directly, and takes a logical approach. Generally, I would not work well with someone who made quick impulsive decisions, and who reacts quickly to change. As leaders if we understand the leadership styles of those working with us then we can effectively delegate and set up teams to get tasks accomplished.

One of the biggest skills that ELI has taught me was how to effectively communicate in a presentation. Coming into to ELI, I said that was one of my goals was to strengthen my leadership presentation skills. I learned how important it was to make a connection with your audience and to speak with confidence.

Overall, ELI has been a great experience for me. It has allowed me the opportunity to network with key university people and explore the vast realm of university policies. To all the future ELLers, here are a few key points to get in good with Jared and Angel:

Bring them gifts.... this is guaranteed to get you an "A" in the class. Jared likes golf balls, while Angel will take anything.

Come to class.... don't miss class you might not learn anything!

Get a major television personality to come to your group project—Oprah, Dr. Phil, etc.

I am going to thoroughly miss my ELI days, and having fun in good of room 357 of the student center! Thanks Jared, Angel, and all the peer mentors for all the hard work that you all have put in to major our ELI class a success.