University Honors Program

Experiential Learning Reflective Essay for Leadership

**Full Name:** Hai Dong

**UC Email:** donght@mail.uc.edu

**College:** McMicken College of Arts and Sciences

**Major:** Chemistry ACS and Biological Sciences

**Title of Project:** Leadershape

**Thematic Area:** Leadership

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**Expected Project End Date:** December 18th , 2013

**Part 1: What?**

* **Provide a brief description of your experience. What did the experience entail? What was most significant about this experience? How did the experience meet and/or differ from the expectations you described in your proposal?**
* **How have you have made progress towards meeting at least 2 of the leadership learning outcomes you identified in your proposal? Provide specific examples from your experience to illustrate your points.**

Leadership learning outcomes:

* Possesses knowledge of various leadership theories and identifies with the characteristics of leadership.
* Ability to exert influence and motivation and enable self and others to meet desired objectives.
* Ability to relate, communicate and work effectively with peers.
* Develops a vision of the future and acknowledges the impact of decisions (as applicable to the individual and affiliated organizations).

 During winter break of 2013, I had the chance to participate one of the most exciting leadership program that I have ever been to and it is one of the most important experiences that I have had so far. Leadershape is not simply just a leadership program, it teaches you how to be a man with vision and how to make your life worth living. We spent six days at camp higher ground to participate in group learning and skill developing in order to help us being successful in our life. Each day is a new challenge that we have to get through in order to discover ourselves and to build a strong community to learn from each other. The most significant thing about this experience is that it is not like any other program that I have attended. Usually a leadership program would teach you things like leadership theories and characteristics of leadership but this program teaches you how to work with each other, how to see the value in every single person to strengthen the value of the group. It also different because it teaches you how to realize you goal in life and what you really want in your life through the work that you have done everyday. You might not think about it but seeing your true goal in life is not always easy and I finally had the chance to actually sit back to think every single night during this 6 days about my life and my goals. It is actually really amazing to look back and to see how much I have grown during those six days. To me it is never about where I want to go, it is always about what I am striving for, what motivated me to work hard every single day that I do not know and through this program I finally saw it. We do no actually have a proposal for this program but to be honest I always think that it is going to be a short class with us doing the writing and professors doing the teaching. After being through it, I now have a totally different perspective about a leadership classes and how they should be. I think they should be just like leadershape with talks to shape your knowledge, reflective writing to learn what you realized and activities to shape your skills. 2 of the leadership learning outcomes that I have archived are:

**Ability to exert influence and motivation and enable self and others to meet desired objectives.**

The thing I like best about leadershape was that we have a family cluster which is a subgroup from he big leadershape community and I have to say this is one of the key thing that makes leadershape such a wonderful program. After every talk we had the chance to get together in a smaller group with a more comfortable environment to talk about things that we learned tha day and what we can do to achieve those things in life when we go back to school. I personally feel really comfortable sharing my stories and ideas with the peers in my group because they willing to listen and listen only to my opinions. There was never a rejection during the discussion, only ideas building up on ideas and it is such a wonderful way to actually work together. The feeling that I have during each family cluster meeting was confident and excited. I was not afraid at all to actually speak my mind and let people contribute their ideas upon it. It is such a great learning process that does not happen everyday so I am really glad that I had a great group of people to share my 6 days experience in leadershape. These people gave me the chance to actually influent them and motivate them in different ways and they also help me to achieve my goal in each discussion. I learned a lot from them and it actually changded my perspective about working in a group.

**Ability to relate, communicate and work effectively with peers.**

 Another best thing about leadershape is that it does not teach you which style of leadership you should follow or even give options for you to choose from, it gives you the chance to actually see yourself through each challenge. For example, I do not actually know which type of leader I actually am because I find myself cannot actually lead people by using my voice but through this program I find a really interesting aspect of my leading style. In each discussion, I was able to create a really comfortable environment for everyone to discuss and gives out their ideas. Every time I see somebody shy or afraid of giving out their ideas I encouraged them to do so. In some intensive situation where the atmosphere seem to be down and everyone seem to be really protective with their opinions I threw out a joke to make the atmosphere become less intense so that we can continue our discussion. It is really interesting because I am not the funny one always make jokes and do no actually do work. I actually think that I can somehow control the atmosphere in the room to make it a better place for everyone to contribute. I feel like I am the type of leader that can drive my peers to the best of their ability and I am happy because of that. This is really meaningful to me because I always feel like I cannot be the leader that actually lead people with my words, I always feel like I want to learn more from everyone and therefore I chose to make them show the best of their ability to me. I think this is such a cool thing that leadershape actually help me to realize so that I can now actively use it everyday of my life, not just my instinct anymore. Now I can actually know where to start whenever I try to lead without trying to find a way to lead like I used to do.

**Part 2: So What?**

* How did your experience impact your development (academic, professional, and/or personal goals)?
* **What academic theories, readings, courses, or concepts did you rely upon to inform to your experiential learning work? How did knowledge of this theory, reading, course, or concept contribute to your learning in this project?**

 In leadershape there is a night that we gather with our family cluster to talk about our goal for future and our path that led us to where we are today. It was actually our first night of leadershape that we talked about it and I do understand why they make it the first night. It was not until now that I realized everything was constructed so beautifully in leadershape. During that first night we had the chance to actually look back at what we did and every big decisions that we made in our life to see if there is a trend or anything that help us realize our goal. It was actually extremely helpful because it was the night that I actually recognize my true goal in life. Drawing everything out on a paper in a mind map I actually saw a patent in my work. Before I came to leadershape I always wonder why do I like so many thing? I like music, I like art, I like sciences, I like cooking… I like a lot of thing that I cannot explain myself why I even like those things. You know, some people like sciences, some people love art and some people become chef. I do not understand why I like so many things that have nothing related to each other like that. And that night I had the same struggle. I drew everything out on a paper just like I did so many times before and I look at it wondering what is happening in my life actually. I did not give much thought about it but then Charlie, our leader came and ask me why I finished it so quickly. Of course I can finish it really quickly because I have been drawing it in my head so many time that I do not even need to think twice when I draw the map. I told him that I have done this so many time but nothing seem to makes sense about my life at all accept that I want to be a doctor. Then he told me that goal does not have to be a physical achievement or anything to big. It can simply be like being with our family or singing our favorite songs. Right at that moment my mind was like “boom”, this is what I have been looking for for so long. After Charlie left I tried to find a adjective that can actually describe my feeling that I have every time I do these things and eventually and really quickly one word came to my mind: Happiness. Exactly what I have been looking for. Everything I do I strive for happiness but not just my happiness, it is happiness to everyone around me too. I sing because I love to see people enjoy my musics, I take pictures because I want to nail those smiles into my life, I do science because I always believe health is one of the keys to happiness. Everything just makes sense and then I was able to realize what I need to do next in my life. It is such a simple thing but so difficult to find. You have so many ideas like winning a Nobel prize, being famous, getting all that money but one simple thing like happiness is something that I have never thought of and that night totally help me to realize my vision for my life.

 During this program I never actually think that there is a concept or theory that was actually used. Instead of teaching us some fancy concept they teach us simple things like how to listen to others, how to bring your vision into your life, how to lead with integrity and how to stay in action daily. These are not concepts or theories, these are just simple things that was translated into scientific words. I have been saying these things everyday in my own words like: how to work well with others, what is my goal, how to make people listen and how to be successful. This is a really great thing about leadershape because it is so simple yet so deep in many ways. Coaches in leadershape used their skill to root these ideas deep into our mind and make us think about It everyday to help us realize how simple things can change our life. I might never have the chance to value these simple ideas if I did not join leadershape. This is one of a life-changing experience to me and I really glad that I applied to be a part of leadershape this year.

* **How are you integrating what you learned from this experience into your life? What connections have you drawn between this experience and other experiences both within the classroom and beyond?**
* **How have you shared your learning with others and disseminated your work? Who was your audience and what did they learn? What did you gain from the experience of sharing your learning?**

**Part 3: Now What?**

 Integrating this experience into my life is the hardest part because in real life you do not have a full day to think and apply these ideas into your decisions. Every decisions was made in a few seconds and everything has be quick because you do not want to lose your chances because of spending to much time on thinking. You also have a lot of things on your mind to think about like your homework, your jobs so it is also really distracting to actually think about leadership experiences that you have during leadershape. One good way that I found works best for me is that I try to practice it bit by bit every day to slowly turning these skills that I learned from leadershape into my habits so that I can use it with my instinct. With this solution I can quickly applied what I learned in a quicker way and still keep up with my works.

The connection that I drawn between this experience and my work in classes is really amazing. The last part of the program, staying in action, is probably the one that I applied that most. I have to keep working to be a better person everyday both in my classes and in life. Every time I do something wrong I look back and immediately try to improve it. For example, I always wait until one to two days before the due date of my home works to finish them but now I actually do them before hand so that I can have a bit more time to look back and check them later. Another example is that going to meetings one time. I always have a problem of being on time and it is really a bad habit. That is why I now always try to be five to ten minutes early in every events although my schedule is packed with classes and works.

 After getting back from leadershape I have been sharing it with a lot of people. I have never talk about it formally anywhere but I actually talk about to my friends and my family. It made such a great impact on my life that I have to share it with everyone that is interested so that they can also have a chance to learn about themselves. My audiences rank widely, not just students but also professor, advisors and my relatives. Every time I share my experiences to them, I got a lot of question back and those question actually remind me of what I learn from leadershape so it is a great way for me to actually review my knowledge everyday. This helped me so much when I tried to develop leadershape skills into my habit.