

# PEER-LED TEAM LEARNING THE EXPERIENCE OF LEADING

## REFLECTIONS BY A RESERVED WORKSHOP LEADER

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The Workshop sessions helped me to interact with different kinds of students with various strengths, shortcomings and different attitudes, whom I wouldn't have generally come across due to my reserved nature. It was an opportunity for me to mix and mingle with all kinds of people, develop my interpersonal, leadership and communication skills. As time went by, I think I got better in explaining things to people and being more comfortable speaking in front of large groups of students. As time went by, I also got over the feeling that I was a minority Peer Leader with an accent that Americans students are not used to, and this boosted my confidence as a leader and consequently increased my comfort level with the students.

The leadership training course disciplined me as a good Workshop Leader; I learned how to deal with different people and different situations. I was very careful about how I approached or talked to troublesome students or students who were very weak in the subject, or students who found it very difficult to get the concepts at once. I was also tactful with students who would stubbornly state incorrect things pertaining to the subject matter, become argumentative and try to prove me wrong. Whether it was the unruly student or the weak student, I dealt with them with patience and courtesy, which even some highly qualified and tenured professors fail to do.

I had some unfortunate incidents with an unruly Workshop Coordinator: it was very annoying to be working with this person, and at a certain point I was on the verge of quitting solely because of her disrespectful nature. However, later on, I realized that this is the way life is and I need to deal with it in a mature and professional way; I was patient with her for a while and when she crossed certain limits, I reported her to my superiors, which sorted things out. From this experience, I have learned that you don't have to put up with someone who is harassing you, even if they are in a higher position than you are, and that you need to stand up for yourself and for justice!

I also had another unfortunate incident as a Workshop Coordinator (the position now called "Faculty Liaison," also called "Superleader" at some campuses), where the professor whom I was assigned to work with perceived workshops as not so important in the learning process and hence failed to encourage students to attend or give credit for attending and doing the work at these sessions. At the beginning, I was very persuasive and tried my best to make him realize the importance of workshops; however, this professor was so adamant and went to the point of saying that he was the professor and was in charge and therefore I had to do whatever he said. This experience helped me to understand that certain things in life cannot be done according to your wishes and sometime you need to live with it or get out of it for your own good. Unfortunately, I quit workshops the following semester, which was my last semester as an undergraduate, and I feel that the experience with this professor who had no regard for the workshop also played a role in my making this decision.

Last but not least, the workshop experience has played a big role in influencing me to make the decision of going for a Ph.D. in Chemical Engineering, after completing my bachelor's degree. Whether I choose to do research in industry or go into academia, the people-management skills, and interpersonal skills that I have acquired and developed through this experience will definitely help me to become successful in my profession, especially when it comes to dealing with different people and making critical decisions.

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