Grace Dalton

LSEM 50

Martz

New Lancer Days Experience

New Lancer Days, on the surface, are all about having a good time. Now granted, some of the activities are more enjoyable then others, freshmen do not seem to enjoy the lectures as well as tailgating, but overall, it is enjoyable. Throughout the four days freshmen are able to meet many people, which allows them to go into college with a friend group already somewhat in place, which is one of the major stress evoking parts of college; having to start all over. What if, however, instead of looking at what the freshmen take away at a surface level, look at the experience at a much deeper level. What is it that they are really learning, even if they are not entirely aware of it? When looking closer, common lessons can be found. Longwood is encouraging the growth of personal responsibility, self-sufficiency, and citizen leadership.

Personal responsibility is not a new practice for the freshmen, however, when entering college, it is taken to a level freshmen are not quite used to. Take homework as an example, for typical high school students, their homework is expected to be completed and on time. If this is accomplished the student in return gets an award, a good grade. When entering college this is not the case. Students are still expected to complete their homework, but the teacher offers no motivation or award. Professors will not check to see if the homework they assigned was completed. In their opinion, if the student did not complete the work, the only person they are affecting is themselves. During New Lancer Days the freshmen were challenged to be personally responsible during many of the presentations. The honor and integrity ceremony challenged incoming students to honor the code that Longwood lives by as well as the consequences if they do not abide by this pledge. Freshmen were presented with the effects of alcohol and drugs during the Molecules That Mess With Your Mind presentation. This allowed freshmen to be informed of the consequences of taking and abusing substances, but in the end it is their responsibility to make the right choice. This theme was also demonstrated in the What’s Your Soundtrack presentation by informing students of sexual assault and what to do and where to go if it happens. Along with responsibility, Longwood is also trying to mold its freshmen to be self-sufficient.

When going to college, one of the big things that freshmen have to figure out is learning to be self-sufficient. To some this is a brand new concept, but to others they have been doing this all of their lives. In order to be self-sufficient it means having the ability to do things on your own, to not be co-dependent. When in high school, most students have their parents to help them along the way. In most cases the food you ate, the clothes on your back, and the roof over your head was all thanks to your parents. They helped with time management and also reminded you of upcoming deadlines so you would not forget to do something. This, however, is not the same in college. Freshmen quickly realize all that their parents did for them and how much they are responsible for now. The money management presentation was extremely helpful in that it showed freshmen how they can divvy up their money in order to make it work with all of these new expenses. This is a concept that some people are never exposed to and many would greatly benefit from. Being self-sufficient is a skill that everyone must acquire, but one must also learn the meaning of a true citizen leader because without that knowledge it is difficult to reach your full potential.

Citizen leadership is a concept that Longwood University stresses greatly. They want all of their students to be considered student leaders. Wes Moore, the author of *The Other Wes Moore,* delivered a truly inspirational speech on his life and how he became a leader. He stressed the fact that everyone has the ability to reach their full potential, however, that is your decision to make. Moore was not saying that you make the journey alone, because you have people who will influence you and help you get there, but in the end it is your decision if you recognize what you could do with your life. This, however, is not the end you must then act on it. The journey will not be easy, however, it is not impossible.

Through the LSEM experience I believe the freshmen class should be able to walk away and say that they learned something. That being said, no one is going to learn it for you, so if you go into a setting expecting to get nothing out of it, most likely you will do just that, however, if you go in thriving to learn something, even one thing, you will. LSEM is a great experience that challenges freshmen to develop into to strong citizen leaders that can fiend for themselves. For me, the overall message that I got out of LSEM is that you can know all of the facts and know if something is wrong or right, but in the end it is up to you. It is up to you what kind of person you want to become and it is up to you to get there. As a Longwood student everyone knows the consequences of breaking honor code, but in the end you make the decision to cheat on that test or not. We all have the power and potential to become successful individuals that will excel in life, but like my elementary school principal would always say, “Make it a great day or not, the choice is yours.”