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Reflections on New Lancer Days

New Lancer Days is an annual tradition at Longwood University. During these extended orientation days—often referred to as “the first four days of the best four years of your life”—new freshmen (and even transfer students, if they want to come) learn a lot of information about Longwood and its policies and become more accustomed to the campus and college life. As a member of the Cormier Honors College, I got a three-day head start on this process during the honors leadership retreat. By the end of this retreat, I was exhausted and honestly skeptical of how much fun New Lancer Days would be, but I was pleasantly surprised. During these days it becomes even more obvious why the returning students love Longwood University so much and why all of the incoming freshmen will too. You also get to see some of the characteristics in faculty, staff, peer mentors, guest speakers, and even the new freshmen that Longwood Seminar encourages and honors: personal responsibility, self-sufficiency, and citizen leadership.

Personal responsibility is essentially choosing and taking responsibility for your own actions. One thing I heard a few times throughout these orientation days was that you are not going to get any more out of something that what you put into it. For example, as a student, I am responsible for my school work. I cannot expect good grades if I do not do my homework and study as much as needed. This is something that I am glad I heard multiple times throughout my first week because it has stuck with me and I now have that advice to remind myself of throughout my college career. This may help me better my sense of personal responsibility. The quality of personal responsibility was represented in all of the peer mentors. They made a decision to take time out of their schedules to help the incoming freshmen and be responsible for an entire group of students. Not only did they help throughout New Lancer Days, but they were there for orientation and will be there throughout the entire Longwood Seminar course as well.

Self-sufficiency is a characteristic that is closely related to independency. To be self-sufficient means that you do not need help from others to satisfy your own needs. Although a lot of the presentations we attended during New Lancer Days encouraged us to help others around us, it was also shown that we cannot depend on that. This quality was also shown in the peer mentors. They helped and taught the freshmen on their own, even though they are still students themselves. As freshmen, Longwood Seminar is our helping hand on our way to being self-sufficient.

At Longwood University, you often hear the words “citizen leader.” Citizen leaders are independent individuals who have the power and responsibility to make decisions. The faculty and staff at Longwood turn all incoming freshmen into citizen leaders over the few years of time they spend at this institution. This quality is such a big part of Longwood that it even made the “Mission & Vision” page on Longwood University’s website. Citizen leadership was talked about all throughout New Lancer Days, but I think it was represented most during the Honor and Integrity Ceremony. This quality was shown in the honor board and the twelve characteristics they talked about during this ceremony.

In my New Lancer Days experience, the person who stood out to me most for having these three characteristics was my peer mentor, Mike Dinh. Since it was his first year being a peer mentor, he was learning as well alongside us during New Lancer Days. He was very helpful during those four days and I know he will continue to help his group of freshmen. If he does not know the answer to our questions, he will figure it out or find someone else who does. I am very thankful as a freshman to have this immense amount of support from the peer mentors, as well as the faculty.

One characteristic that these three qualities (personal responsibility, self-sufficiency, and citizen leadership) share is independency. In my opinion, being independent is very important, especially as a college student and for the future in the workplace. As freshmen, we have not yet obtained these qualities fully, but as Longwood students, we are well on our way. New Lancer Days was a very helpful and informative experience and I am confident that my Longwood Seminar course will be as well.