

## Report on the ISLI Camp 2016, 29.2. – 4.3.2016 in Oberwesel

As one of the winners of the 2015 competition, I was treated to the unique experience of participation in the annual ISLI Camp in Oberwesel. Created to improve international communication and promote student leadership, the camp changed me in a way nothing ever had. I never even heard about this institution prior to my invitation, and so, unsure what at all to expect, I arrived at the Oberweseler Jugendgästehaus. With the entry card to my room came a little named badge with a coloured dot (in my case light blue) on it. I quickly saw that everyone had one but realized only the next that for the coming days my partners-in-colour would become colleagues and many my good friends.

As the last arrivals had been confirmed, all participants were directed to the conference centre, and witnessed a solemn introduction into the week involving the national anthems of every country being played, and speeches of welcome by Clyde Everell and John Keaton, the European and American directors respectively. It was also at this point that the coordinating regents revealed the structure and planning of the following days and what was exactly in store for us. The assembly transformed smoothly into an informal meet & greet evening, and what struck me the very first evening and would remain a feature of pleasurable fascination was the openness and friendliness of staff, regents and participants alike. I got to know an extraordinary number of people I would never have met in any other circumstance, and am still in contact with a good deal of them.

A good night's sleep was followed by an early breakfast (another, albeit more sinister, feature of my time there) and a general summons to another assembly, the first of a dozen or so in the next few days dealing with a range of skills and aspects of leadership, held by the regents in charge. This finished we were turned out into our colour-groups.

After a short preamble by our instructor and a shorter round of introductions, a sealed bag was opened containing our set task to complete. This task was meant to assess our understanding of the presentation that preceded it and asked for a certain creative display of our knowledge. Examples would be a rap battle with team orange in a showdown between authentic and inauthentic leadership, or a sketch outlining successful membership recruitment strategies.

This process soon became routine as we completed 4-5 tasks a day.

The evening programme of fun and games was well attended and very well received creating a balance to the extremely hard work of the day. It may not seem like backbreaking labour to sit in a conference room sipping pepsi, but being involved in heated discussions and agonizing decision-making while trying to keep the group together AND push through your ideas leaves you more emotionally drained and physically exhausted than anything I've ever done.

On the 2nd evening, two major events occurred: firstly the presentation and explanation of the results of a questionnaire discerning character traits answered by every participant and the announcement that regency candidature was open for aspirants.

Being declared a regent is a great honour and to become the regent, i.e. mentor of next year's ISLI Camp, one has to win a majority vote ahead of one's national competitors. The seats available are distributed strictly according to nationality, i.e. one seat for each represented nation with the exception of Germany and the USA, with two and three seats respectively. Also, the prospectives who participated via their school had to limit themselves to a single school candidate, a restriction luckily not imposed on the BWF candidates, which explains the high rate of participation on behalf of our group.

The minimum requirements for candidature are a written letter of intent and a speech on the election evening in front of all assembled. After a nerve-wracking two minutes of solemn intonation, all I could do was hope. In the end, the vote turned out favourably. The possibility of returning again as a mentor in 2017 made me very happy and proud. I am deeply grateful for this unique opportunity.

Jan Schulenberg, April 2016