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SAMPLE: PERSONAL STATEMENT UNDERGRAD

Personal Statement, Phalanx Commendable Leadership Award

[The first paragraph introduces the topic and scope of the statement. Paragraphs are organized based on stages of leadership development. Thesis and paragraph topic sentences appear in bold. Note the supporting evidence for each stage.]

As an Engineering and Management major, organizing and planning are second nature. From day one, we are trained to plan meetings, organize groups, and oversee projects. Even as a freshman, I took every opportunity to practice these skills and take charge of groups I was in for classes. Over time, people began to see me as a capable manager, and I was asked to take on leadership roles in various campus groups. **This is how I have come to learn, experience, and apply the differences between management and leadership.**

My first realization of this difference came during my junior year in my role as secretary for the E&M honor society Sigma Tau Iota. With the rest of the leadership team, I went to each section of the E&M freshman project class and gave a presentation on internship and study abroad opportunities. After our presentation, several students came up to me and wanted to hear more about my experience studying abroad in Austria, asked questions, and took down my email address to send me their application essays. Frankly, I was rather surprised at their enthusiastic response and desire for my advice. I began to understand that the influence that I had as a leader extended beyond the influence I had in organizing the visit to the class. **I learned the potential for leaders to impact others on a personal level.**

Orchestra seemed an unlikely place to practice my newfound ideas about leadership: I was just there to play music! But just like any organization, the group experienced conflict, which is a key opportunity for leadership to emerge from unexpected places. In the case of orchestra, I was in the role of librarian in charge of copying music and organizing the filing cabinet. However, when conflicts over rehearsals arose among the members, I saw that action was needed. I pushed for a vote to see what the group thought. When the orchestra voted to hire a new conductor, the president left the entire hiring process to me and my fellow librarian. This experience opened my eyes to the fact that leadership is not intrinsically tied to position. **While only a librarian, I was able to lead the group by observing problems and bringing about change.**

As president of InterVarsity Christian Fellowship, I experienced the most growth in learning the meaning of leadership. Here, I led not only a chapter of seventy students across two campuses, but also a leadership team of fifteen people in charge of a wide variety of activities. **In this context, I discovered how important it is for a leader to have a vision and be able to communicate it.** During my first semester as president, my team and I didn't change much about the structure of IVCF; we just aimed to keep it moving. I discovered it is hard to keep a group moving if they didn't know where they were going! Thus, at semester's end, my leadership team and I spent time planning for the *next* semester. This time, I had specific goals, and I was able to communicate them to my team. In the following semester, we worked hard to get the chapter excited about this vision and were able to grow as a result.

My degree has prepared me to be a manager in my future career, but it has been my roles in extra-curricular groups on campus that have taught me to be a leader.