

GLOBAL LEADERSHIP RETREAT

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Last weekend I had the wonderful opportunity to participate in the Global Leadership Retreat for USI women. The program is designed to bring together international students studying at USI as well as students from the U.S. who have studied abroad in other countries. The weekend includes a series of workshops and small group discussions as well as team-building activities to help women develop skills to be successful global leaders. This was my first time attending the retreat, so I was very excited to see what the weekend had in store.



On Friday, I hopped on a bus along with about thirty other girls on our way to New Harmony, a small, peaceful town located only half an hour away from the university. I found a seat next to some friends and began chatting about how much we were looking forward to the weekend. Before we knew it, we had arrived at the Barn Abbey, a renovated barn overlooking the river that would serve as our temporary home for the next few days.

Once we were all settled in, we gathered in the main room to begin getting to know one another and start our leadership-building activities. Many of us already knew each other from participating in some of the other wonderful activities and programs put on through the international office at USI, and those of us who hadn't met were able to take some time to introduce ourselves. Afterward, we began the first of several discussions led by inspirational women in our community, including USI's own Assistant Provost for International Programs and Services, Ms. Heidi Gregori-Gahan. The discussion for this first night focused on the power of vulnerability. We learned about how important it is to be open and honest in order to make true connections with other people. After dinner and discussions, we had some free time to play games and just have fun. It was a great first night of the retreat, and we all headed to bed excited for what the next day would bring.



The next morning, we woke up and had breakfast at the Barn Abbey before walking a few short blocks to New Harmony's conference center. The topic of our first discussion of the day was the essential skills of leadership. We talked about what it means to be a leader, who can be a leader, and what it takes to be a good leader. We took a break in the middle of the day to have lunch at one of New Harmony's best coffee shops and restaurants and do a little exploring downtown. The town of New Harmony was originally built to be a utopia, and today its unique architecture and natural beauty still make it a fun place to explore and reflect. Feeling refreshed, we returned to the conference center to continue with more workshops on team building and conflict resolution. In the evening we ate dinner together at one of New Harmony's nearby restaurants then headed back to the Barn Abbey for more games and fun.



Sunday was the last day of the retreat. We headed back to the conference center for a few more workshops and brunch before returning to Evansville. On the bus ride back to campus, I thought about everything I'd learned, all the friends I'd made, and how grateful I was for this experience. I can't think of a better way to spend a weekend than taking some time off to connect and learn with such a wonderful group of people. The Global Leadership Retreat was just one of several meaningful experiences I've had thanks to the international programs at USI.

