

*“Leadership and learning are indispensable to each other.”*

*~ Dallas Trade Mart, 1963*

Last year I was selected by my peers to act as a costume/fashion captain for our annual Red and Gold theatrical production, which is put on entirely by the young women of Rosary High School. During the three-month preparation process I feel that I demonstrated initiative and leadership skills when I was placed in the position of having to choose between my popularity and the integrity of my design product. I discovered a side of myself that was much stronger than I had ever realized.

The situation unfolds like this. I designed, created, budgeted, prepared and sewed thirty fairy costumes for a choral number. My products were nearly complete when I received a phone call from a superior student advisor who requested help. This student knew that my previous year's costumes had won for best overall design, that my current costumes were almost complete, and that I had a quick eye for creativity and design. Her request was to take a few pieces from some of my costumes and create watered down ensembles for the entire drama cast, which would entail about ten new versions of the same design. No, I did not laugh in her face. Instead, I asked her why my design should be compromised along with the team's entire production just to cover for her failure to complete the assignment.

I discovered my own strength in that I have always tried to give one-hundred percent effort to any project assigned. Quality must come first. Also, I stood up for my own design to save it from being altered, which in turn preserved the integrity of the production. Our team did go on to win the 2002 annual Red and Gold Competition.

My refusal to compromise was unpopular with some, but believing in my design and the integral part it would play in the production was worth the scorn. I was a little weak in the sense that I was too harsh with the student advisor, and should have made my “no” a little softer. However, I did spend several hours with that same student advisor, giving her guidelines, suggestions and ideas for her own costumes. Working together not only resulted in better costuming but also renewed our team spirit.

There is a secret to leadership – one must be willing to work with others and their abilities, not trying to change them or wishing they were someone or something different. I learned that a leadership role is not as glorious as it sounds, but that it teaches us things about others and ourselves that may not otherwise have been learned.