Our families and communities often define us and our individual worlds. Community might refer to your cultural group, extended family, religious group, neighborhood or school, sports team or club, co-workers, etc. Describe the world you come from and how you, as a product of it, might add to the diversity of the University of Washington.\*

~~Leading ice breakers on my first day as a counselor at my local church was terrifying.~~

~~I was suddenly thrust into a position with responsibility and while I can think sitting down, now I had to do it on my feet. In the days leading up to camp I reviewed what I needed to do. I ran it through over and over, letting it rattle around the echo chamber of my head until I was stressed beyond reason. And finally the day came: The first day of camp. It was chaos.~~

Leading ice breakers on my first day was a heart-pounding challenge, marking my transition from a freshman behind a school desk to action as a summer camp counselor at my local church. In my eight years as a camper, I had little confidence talking to groups, but I took a deep breath, straightened my posture, and launched whole-heartedly into the icebreakers.

I didn’t do well.

At the next team debriefing, I was given advice like make eye contact with the whole crowd before speaking, regularly check my breathing, and talk to the person furthest away. I received lots of tips and was told “there’s nothing to worry about”, “we’re here for you”, and “my first time was worse”.

Having such a supportive team willing to give me a second chance was refreshing. Everyone helped each other by sharing their knowledge and experiences, allowing all of us to learn and build a sense of community. When my next turn to lead my own activity came a couple weeks later, I felt more confident. I utilized the tips I was given, and I knew that I greatly improved.

Since then, I’ve been a camp counselor for 2 more years, growing more as a leader each day. Joining such a supportive community has opened my eyes to the value of believing in people. I’ve grown to be more receptive of feedback, supportive of my teammates through hardships, and willing to lend a helping hand.

I’d love to continue my commitment to faith-based service through opportunities like the CELE Center’s internship with Street Youth Ministries and other nonprofits. Given my 3 years working with young people and my community of counselors, I am well-prepared to actively contribute to UW’s community by applying my dedication to mentorship and community support, promoting an environment of strength and unity.   
  
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