



First-Year Writing Seminar: The Podcast, Season 5
Cottey College

Episode Transcript: Diana Van Atta on “Leadership Qualities and Skills are Learned and Developed”

Intro Music fades in

Hello and welcome back to the This I Believe podcast, we have a special guest with us today, and she’s talking about her experiences with learning leadership skills throughout her time in FIRST robotics. Let’s give it up for Diana Van Atta.

transition sound– swoosh 2

Hello, thank you for having me, as you mentioned, I am Diana Van Atta, and I’ll be speaking today on my leadership experiences within my robotics experiences, and how they have led me to develop my firm stance and “This I believe” statement. Which is that I believe that leadership skills are best developed young, and that giving people problems to solve helps them to grow.

To offer a little bit of background here, I have been participating in FIRST, For the Inspiration and Recognition of Science and Technology, robotics programs since I was nine years old. I can distinctly remember being a small eight year and following my older sister Naomi to her robotics team’s meetings and begging the coach to let me help with building and programming the robot. When I first started participating in robotics I had no idea just how much teamwork and outreach went into it.

Young Diana was absolutely flabbergasted to learn that a key part of robotics was building leadership skills in young children and giving them the opportunities and experiences to learn about how to work with and lead a team effectively, no matter what problem is put in front of you.

This concept really draws me to the third “Foundational Skill of Leadership,” which is the idea that “leadership skills are learned and developed” we covered this heavily within my first year writing seminar class in college. (FWS 8). Much of my coach's teachings early in the season were on teamwork exercises and how to adapt to problems in a way that allows us to work together. He was very frank when talking with the girls on our team about how people would hesitate to take us seriously in STEM environments, and, as such, one of his goals was to drill into us how to lead in such a way that our capabilities were clear.

FIRST robotics itself centers around the idea of imbuing young people with a love for STEM and the skills necessary to set themselves up for success. I genuinely believe that my time spent

with my teammates and peers problem solving as a group, and puzzling over how to fix a bug in our code helped me to better stand on my own two feet in professional settings. My robotics experiences are what I can point to for where I developed my assertiveness and leadership skills. I had to learn how to speak clearly and with authority, how to present a project in front of potential sponsors, how to handle inter team fighting, and more; these experiences that pushed me to expand my comfort zone allowed me to develop skills that I now use in my everyday life.

I would not be the person that I am today if I did not participate in robotics, and I most certainly wouldn't have developed nearly as many leadership skills as I have. It is because of this that I believe that leadership skills are best developed young, and that giving people problems to solve helps them to grow. Thank you for having me, it was wonderful to talk with you regarding my experiences.

Transition sound– swoosh 2

Thank you for coming to speak with us Ms. Van Atta, your insights into the development of leadership skills we're certainly appreciated. This has been a wonderful episode to participate in and we hope our listeners enjoyed it to. Have a great day everyone. This I believe, signing off!

Outro music

Works Cited:

First-year Writing Seminar (FWS 101). "First-Year Writing Seminar's Five Foundational Principles for Leadership," Cottey College, 2023.

Sound Attributions:

The sound playing throughout my "This I believe" podcast is the song "Journey Within - Instrumental [primary]" which I found on Podcastle's selections of free audio. I also used a small sound titled "swoosh 2" for the two short transitions between the intro and the main body, and the main body and the outro. "Swoosh 2" was also one of Podcastle's free sounds. The final sound I used was the song "Worth - Instrumental [primary]," which I used as the intro and outro sounds.