My decision to come to the University of Cincinnati was not one that I was initially happy with. The school itself had a great reputation and I had heard amazing things about the academic programs, but there were other factors that turned me away from the idea of coming here. For starters, the university was too close to home, was said to be in an unsafe location, and none of my friends were going there.

I somehow convinced myself to come with an open mind; meeting new people and experiencing things I hadn’t before would be good for me. It was a struggle at first, but getting involved in various organizations, including ROAR, helped me to meet new people and eventually made me feel at home.

I knew that I wasn’t the only incoming student who had the wrong ideas about UC, and that is why I felt it necessary to show prospective students what a great place UC actually is and this was something I could do as a ROAR tour guide. To take my involvement in the program a step further, I became a part of ROAR ALDP, a group of diverse and determined students that were committed to improving ROAR and UC as a whole.

As a member of ROAR ALDP, I met with my peers once every two weeks to discuss the campus tour program at the University of Cincinnati. The group that I met with was extremely diverse and full of hard-working, motivated students from all corners of the university. The ideas that were discussed throughout the course of ALDP were of high importance for every current and prospective student; these were real issues that we were looking to fix and improve upon. ROAR ALDP was a pre-approved honors experience so going in, I had high expectations. Through the group conversations and in-depth blog posts, I believe that I have a much better understanding of what ROAR is about and what it stands for, as well as myself as a leader and member of a group.

I also think that through this experience, I have been able to focus my energy on two of the research learning outcomes: ability to frame and develop the research project question or problem, and the ability to think beyond the just completed research and articulate how my world view has been impacted by the experience. I reached the first point through the multiple discussions we had at our meetings.

The topics ranged from accessibility of the campus for physically disabled people to different leadership styles. In order to improve the efficiency of the campus and the tours we give, ALDP spent a week creating various “special tour” routes to make the experience more accessible and enjoyable for those who may have difficulty navigating the campus otherwise. We then shared our ideas and discussed the standing issue with other members with ROAR at an all members meeting. I honestly believe that improvements such as this will contribute to helping prospective students see the University of Cincinnati and its students in the best possible light.

As a part of ALDP, we also spent a good amount of time discussing different leadership styles and appropriate situations to use them in. Members shared their own experiences with different organizations and explained how different methods of leading were efficient or not. We also read the book titled “The 21 Irrefutable Laws of Leadership” by John C. Maxwell as a group and discussed its context with open minds. The stories in this book were not exactly the easiest to relate to because of their tendency to be about events that took place decades ago, and so being able to discuss them with a group of peers made them more applicable to my life. There are many really great lessons in this book that can be applied to virtually any situation, whether you are a leader or a member of a group.

Another part of ROAR ALDP was the blog that each member worked on. Every week, each member contributed with a post based on a new topic. Sometimes these posts were based on conversations we had had during a meeting, but often the posts consisted of reflection and more intensive thoughts on lingering issues. We often connected these topics to ideas from “The 21 Irrefutable Laws of Leadership” in order to better learn how the two correlate. I honestly believe that these blogs not only helped me to think more intensively about myself and leadership, but also learn how other people viewed the topic and handled such situations. Because of ALDP, I am determined to become more involved in ROAR and other organizations and take up leadership roles. For example, I was recently elected as co-captain of UC Dhadak International Dance Team at the University of Cincinnati, and I think that the lessons I have learned in ALDP have left me better prepared and capable for this position.

But of course, I can take these lessons past college and extracurricular activities. As an aspiring entrepreneur, its inevitable that I will be leading at least a small group of people. I look forward to being able to efficiently take what I have learned and apply it to a real life situation.