

## **Student Stories Project: Michael Gibbs**

Audio version available at: <http://www.alumni.indiana.edu/profiles/students/gibbs.shtml>

**[IU fight song]**

**Welcome to the Indiana University Student Stories Project, a production of the IU Alumni Association. I'm your host, Alana Salata. In this series, you'll get an insight into what it takes to be a student leader here at IU, from the perks –**

***“One of the members of the club brought the Mad Money show to campus. Now, that was a big step for both the school and the club.”***

**– to the hard work –**

***“Graduate school takes up more time and energy than you can anticipate.”***

**– to the memories that will last a lifetime.**

***“I traveled to India in the fall of 2006 with 60 students from the Kelley School of Business.”***

**Join me on this journey through the lives of IU student leaders.**

**[IU fight song]**

**SALATA: Today we're at IU East speaking with Michael Gibbs of the Learning Community program.**

GIBBS: My name is Michael Gibbs. I'm a freshman at IU East. My major is English. I'm from Eaton, Ohio, and I'm interested in developing my writing skills.

**Why did you choose to attend IU East?**

The reason I chose to attend IU East is I came to orientation and I just really liked the school. I went to another school in the past, three or four years before, and I felt that faculty here really cared, and it just felt a lot better here after visiting and meeting people, meeting the faculty. And it's closer to where I live.

**Tell me about a meaningful or enjoyable experience you have had at IU East.**

Probably one of the most meaningful experiences is being a part of the Learning Community, which is now called LINC'S, Learning in Communities, because after the initial, first Learning Community that they experimented with last year, this year they are focusing on many Learning Communities. That gave me a great foundation, and I feel like I can accomplish a lot. I made a lot of good friends with the faculty and the students.

**What advice would you give to incoming freshmen and other students just starting out at IU East?**

I just feel if you're going to come to college, you need to just take advantage of all the opportunities that college has to offer. I know there's some younger students that just come out of high school and try to treat college like high school, and you can't do that, because college is completely different than high school. To just take advantage of all the opportunities and take it seriously, but have fun at the same time, and then enjoy the process.

**Tell me a little about the Learning Community program.**

The Learning Community is when you come for your first year and you're taking your general classes. The Learning Community is linked to four main general-interest classes. Say that there's, like, 21 students in the class. Those same students will go to all four classes throughout the day, and you have four faculty members that are close together and work together to come up with the program and the schedule that you're going to be going through. And by doing that, you become very close to these people. There's just a different ... it's just completely different. You get somewhat extra attention, which helps you excel, and because of the Learning Community, I think, like, we broke records – everybody got a really high grade average, like, the class got a really high grade average. It was, like, a wonderful experience, and I made friends that feel like I'll have forever.

**How did you find out about the program, and why did you decide to become involved?**

I came to orientation. They gave out a little pamphlet. I think I was told about it, but after reading the pamphlet, it just sounded like it would be a great way to, like, really get involved in school and school activities and get to know people really well and start a great foundation. That's what I feel like it is: it's just a really good foundation to start your college life.

**Tell me about a specific program event that you were involved in that you are particularly proud of.**

One event, we went to the Freedom Center in Cincinnati together on a bus. That was a really neat experience to learn about past unfreedoms that people had and continue to have, and then how the world has changed and became better in certain ways, but how we can continue to make things better. And that was a really neat experience, to experience that with my teachers and the other students.

**What challenges have you faced during your participation in this program?**

To be honest, the most difficult challenge for me was the next semester after being involved in the Learning Community. I feel like since it's an experiment and it's new, I feel like there should be a more easier transition, because when you're in the Learning Community and then you go into just a regular school environment where the teachers are not connected and you're in class with a lot of different kids, it's completely different. And that was a little difficult to adjust. I was

in some of the same classes with some of my Learning Community peers, and one teacher, I think, had a difficult time because we were so boisterous – because in the Learning Community, it was really, really open to a lot of dialogue and a lot of discussion. And we were so ready to discuss that the teacher wasn't ready to experience that, because she usually probably has to really work at getting people to discuss things. I think just the adjustment, and I think because of that they will come up with something to make that adjustment easier.

**How have your leadership skills developed over the course of your participation in the Learning Community program?**

It's helped me out a lot. I'm normally a shy person – usually I felt like I was a follower in the past because I'm really motivated to do well in school. I am doing surprisingly well. I feel like I have been given the role of leader much more than I have in my entire life. Being in that position is a little awkward for me, but I'm enjoying it. I enjoy helping others, so....

**What other organizations are you a part of here at IU East?**

I'm on SALC, and it's the Student Association of Learning Communities. One of my peers started it. Hopefully we'll continue to have that association to help people that've been in learning communities. I'm in the Writers' Group, the Honors Program, the Humanities Club....

**What are your future goals, and how do you think IU East has helped prepare you to meet those goals?**

My future goal is to develop the skills and ability to succeed in life and to find a good career that I can enjoy and support myself at the same time. And to grow as a person, which I already feel I have in just the first year.

**What will you miss the most when you graduate?**

Probably the friends I've made. Teachers, other students. Learning, I enjoy learning.

**We've been talking with Michael Gibbs of IU East's Learning Community program.**

**[IU fight song]**

**This series was produced by the Indiana University Alumni Association, with special thanks to the IU Marching Hundred and director Dave Woodley. I'm Alana Salata.**

**[IU fight song]**