ASHS Leadership Academy Class II Session 1
Mengmeng Gu, Leadership Scholar Class II

So, we have been selected for the ASHS Leadership Academy Class II. Yay! Before we came to the face-to-face meeting a day before the annual ASHS conference, we did the Myers-Briggs type indicator (MBTI) evaluation, as instructed by Dr. Robert Flores, Interim Co-Director of Education of California Agricultural Leadership Foundation, & Professor Emeritus in Agricultural Education & Communication at Cal Poly-San Luis Obispo. The anticipation of getting to know myself through the MBTI was an interesting feeling.

After lunch with ASHS Leadership Academy Class I, we sat around a table in Dr. Louise Ferguson’s President Suite, introducing ourselves and showing two things we brought as part of the ‘show and tell’. Being probably the oldest in the cohort, I enjoyed getting to know the ASHS rising stars from both academia and industry (Daniel Wells, Jeb Fields, Jeremy Green, Matt Bertucci and Erin Alvarez—not present). It was interesting that quite a few men in the group all loved cooking (or grilling).

We had an assignment----reading a book ‘Getting Out of the Box’, and had a discussion during the meeting. It’s a book on leadership and especially the aspect of treating other people, whether we box ourselves in or coming out of the ‘box’ to see other people as people, instead of objects. I shared a recent book I read on Dr. Temple Grandin, who’s a shining star in the autistic world. If you don’t know who she is, YouTube her. Her story made me more aware of not only autism, but also the need to know others better and stop imposing our own views on others.

Definitely from the introduction, there is a huge difference on personality among the cohort before knowing their MBTI results. After his presentation titled ‘Who are you?----Understanding preferential behavior’, Robert handed us our MBTI personality profile report. We were all reading the 12-page report, nodding and smiling ‘yeah, that’s me!’ Robert repeated it quite a few times that this is your ‘preference’ and it doesn’t mean you decision will always follow this pattern. We ourselves are still the one who decides what type we truly are, as MBTI only provides suggestions. This exercise of understanding ourselves is for us to work more effectively with others.

We shared our thoughts on our MBTI results. Very surprising to me, we have introverts among the cohort, which actually should NOT be a surprise. Introverts could be interested in being leaders and effective in their leadership. I’m grateful for the introverts in the cohort and interested in learning their perspectives. I’d also like to call on all introvert ASHS members----apply for ASHS Leadership Academy!