           The single most important development in my entire existence was moving to North Carolina. That change in my life was largely responsible for the person I am today. Before the move I was a shy, insecure kid that happened to be smart and excelled in class, but was so unconfident that I was never able to be a good leader. Granted, I did have a small tight group of friends, but was definitely not a very popular kid. I went from a pretty laid back smaller school to an incredibly competitive school while at the same time I lost my connection to the place I called home and my friend circle. My entire sophomore year I had trouble making friends; the only friends I made were 2 or 3 seniors from the quiz bowl team, but they hardly qualified as a healthy social group, as kind as they were to me. I grew more unsocial as the year progressed, even depressed because my intelligence was suddenly on the same level as many of my peers. It was a reality check that shook me to my core. I grew even more depressed the summer between my sophomore and junior year because I had lost the few friends I had made to graduation. I also hadn't managed to pick up on any major summer programs as I didn't have any friends to inform me of the opportunities in the area. I was only able to take a small summer class from NCSSM, a school for the state's academically gifted.

But when junior year started I made a friend that I was (and still is) irreplaceable, and I'm sure he doesn't even know that himself. He showed me, that even when I was all alone, there was still someone who cared enough to take me in as a friend. But he didn't stop there. The process was slow, but he started me on a course of self-improvement. We hit the mall, a vast unknown territory that I hadn't stepped foot in since elementary school and convinced me to finally get a haircut. I started hitting the gym at the YMCA with the guidance of my friend. I started pole vaulting in winter track, and once that was over, I also started becoming a lot more active in the clubs I had been part of. Before I was in them just to say I was a member on applications, but as I became more involved with these clubs, I started actually applying myself as I had become a much more confident person. I stopped taking classes to get an A (although I did always try for one), but for the education I got in return for being at school I started worrying less about class rank and GPA. I began taking classes online, both from NCVPS (the state's online education system) and NCSSM. I didn't think I could be valedictorian, but I could still take advantage of the natural talent I had been given, and that was definitely the best change in attitude I had ever made. At the end of the year, I emerged a much more confident person and I had made more friends than I even had in total before.

So with all of this in mind, perhaps I should make a slight change to my starting sentence: it wasn't the move, but the way I adapted to the change that it brought that defines me. I know that there must be an incredible number of students who can claim a story similar to my own, but I can't change the fact that this move can be held accountable for my identity today, and honestly, I wouldn't have it any other way.