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Phelps Family CAP Award Essay

The important pillars to build meaningful lives – the ability to contribute, achieve, and pay-it-forward – are values and behaviors I strive to embody. My contributions to UNC's community by serving on a leadership team, my achievement of academic goals, and my time spent paying-it-forward as a future educator illustrate my commitment to these values.

As a leader for UNC's Christian Challenge, I volunteer my time and talents to help create a strong, unified community at UNC. Strong community is critical for students to thrive and achieve success. I use my skills and talents to serve Challenge and make it a success as a Community Group leader. Community Group is a weekly meeting where students come to build relationships with their peers at UNC, have a support network, and learn important life lessons. As the group's leader, I organize a meeting each week where students come to have a safe community, which can be hard to find. I use my organizational skills and ability to lesson plan to prepare meetings, so our group is effective. Also, I spend time with the students one-on-one throughout the week to provide further community and support.

My bias toward action and performance allows me to achieve academic goals despite obstacles that arise. Freshman year, I set a goal to complete college with a 4.0, and in my junior year I am still on track. My success is a continuation of the high academic achievement I attained in high school. I graduated as valedictorian, even with obstacles due to an injury my senior year of high school. A severe case of tendinitis developed in my arm which made schoolwork extremely difficult to complete. However, I persevered, found accommodations needed to continue my work, and graduated top of my class. I also received top scores on all my AP tests that year, despite the injury. These accomplishments display my ability to achieve and pursue my academic goals.

Paying-it-forward is important because it impacts the lives of others in positive, meaningful ways, and continues cycles of generosity. As a future educator, I will have endless opportunities to pay-it-forward. I will instruct students, but also provide a stable, supportive resource for them. A strong support system is critical for a child's development and growth, and not all students possess that support outside the classroom. The investment of others in me helped shaped who I am and allowed me to grow, and I want to carry on that investment to others. As a future teacher, I will keep that kindness and generosity moving forward. Those who have invested in me enable me to pay-it-forward to the next generation of learners.

As a teacher, I will have a great impact on countless students throughout my career. That is a tremendous responsibility, but one that thrills and excites me as I will continue to contribute, achieve, and pay-it-forward.