**Tell us about a peer who has made a difference in your life.**

Where: McCarthy Middle School. When: 2:45PM on October 1st, 2013. The last bell had just rung and I scurried towards the exit. Suddenly, a long, thin hand jutted out of nowhere, pulling me backwards. I found myself being dragged to the Science Olympiad meeting room. Before I continue, I should probably tell you that I absolutely hated science in middle school. It was my kryptonite; I couldn't look at my dissected frog or even began to describe the chemical formula for glucose. The subject as a whole didn't make sense to me and I would've been fine keeping my distance away from it if weren't for my friend Sophia. She had somehow gotten into her head that Science Olympiad would be "fun" and I was having none of it. This was a congregation of nerds discussing some arbitrary scientific concept using pedantic lexicon that only they could understand. What I came to realize was that I didn’t have to be a scientist to join science team. I began to open my mind to the possibility that maybe I wasn't a lost cause in science and soon enough my science grades improved. In following years, I fell in love with the subject. Sophia pushed me to join women in STEM programs and compete in hackathons, and soon enough science became my best subject. That day in 7th grade, Sophia forever changed my life and for that, I will always be indebted to the tall, history fanatic I call my best friend.

**What about your background, or what perspective, belief, or experience, will help you contribute to the education of your classmates at UNC?**

When I look back on middle school, I see my dark years so to speak. I always wore the wrong type of clothing and spoke differently from my peers, needless to say, I was constantly reminded of my idiosyncrasies. I was stereotyped for being the smart, studious Indian girl and was called out for asking questions. I would ignore the snide remarks whispered behind my back and appeared seemingly unaffected in school, but broke in sobs the moment I got home. Because of this experience, I would create an judgement-free environment where my classmates felt they belonged. I broke out of my frightened shell, transforming into someone who wasn't afraid to voice her own opinions; I would motivate my fellow peers to do so as well. I would cultivate an atmosphere where my peers felt comfortable to ask me, or anyone else for that matter, for any assistance to further their learning. I would encourage my classmates to preserve in the face of adversity and support them in their future endeavors, just as I hope they’d do for me.

I strive to be a leader, to encourage other to express themselves, for that is tlhe only way we can grow. Our diverse backgrounds provides us with an individual take on an idea. By expressing these differing perspectives, we can challenge one another’s thinking, pushing us to expand our minds to achieve the unimaginable because "sometimes it’s the people no one imagines anything of who do the things that no one can imagine”.