My original Action Plan was to plan and carry out a public music performance to raise money and awareness for pediatric brain cancer patients. Neuro-oncology, the study of brain cancers, is a field that has much research but still no cure. The entire world has been waiting for the discovery of this cure, but none has been found yet. The only way for progress to be made is to continue funding scientific research. This is the issue I aimed to address in my original Action Plan. Since then, my project has changed goals but has retained the same methods. After doing much research on brain cancer and local venues to perform at, I finally decided to put on a musical performance at the NC Children's Hospital at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. I decided that fundraising would not be a reasonable component, since the majority of my audience would be visitors and patients of the hospital, and it would not have been appropriate to ask for donations.

For my performance, I found four friends from my Orchestra class at school to join me. My goal was to bring happiness and light to the somberness of the hospital. I wanted to play music with light-hearted themes and cheerful tunes. I hoped that an audience member would benefit from listening to the music and that it would brighten their day. Together, my friends and I formed an orchestral quintet. I called the UNC Hospitals Volunteer Services to reserve a time slot at a small "stage" (a slightly raised platform) next to the stairs and below the cafeteria. My group and I rehearsed about 12 songs that we had learned that year in the class. Our performance took place on Monday, February 18 at 2 PM. Because we did not have any previous advertisement of our performance, our audience consisted of patients and employees who were passing by, and visitors who were eating in the cafeteria upstairs. Once people realized what we
were doing, they began to stop and watch for a few minutes, and then continue on with what they were doing. Because I was not sure what kind of audience I would receive, this was a nice result. I was pleasantly surprised when it brought smiles to faces and even applauds for pieces that were familiar to the public.

A major obstacle I had to overcome was the crunch on time. I was extremely busy during the school year and it was hard to find time to rehearse with my quintet. However, all the time that I spent planning and organizing the performance was definitely worth it. The audience's reaction to our music was the best part of the entire experience. I did not expect much for the first time performing, but many staff members who had stayed after the performance approached me and my group and told us that they pleasantly enjoyed our music. They told me that it was a nice break from all the seriousness that took place in the hospital. To hear such comments encouraged and eventually convinced me to continue performing at the hospitals. I was so thrilled that my music had a positive effect on those who listened.

Currently, I am in no ways ready to put this project away. I loved organizing this performance and would really like to continue it in the future. In order to advance my project, I plan to continue performing at least once a year at the Children's Hospital. It would also be fun to perform during the holiday season, and play Christmas tunes. For the next performance, I plan to branch out and include audience interaction. Since I performed at the Children's Hospital, it would be very fun for the kids in the audience to come up on stage and play instruments such as triangles, drums, and maracas. I would also like to organize my next performance with an organization I came across after my original performance. Door to Door is a non-profit organization run at UNC Hospitals that brings music to patients. Joy Javits, the director of this organization, worked with my piano teacher to schedule a recital and told me that many groups
had approached her with the intention of performing at the hospital. She could help raise awareness about the performance with her connections to the hospital and draw more attention to our goals.

This project has really affected my personality and my outlook on life. I had never experienced anything like it before, and it was exhilarating to try something new. I learned that I love making other people happy, especially when they may be going through a rough time in their life. I was proud to say that I could make someone else smile with my music. I also re-discovered my passion for music and performing for an audience.

At the Leadership Institute, I had learned about the different types of leaders. I identified myself as a "North" leader, meaning I was a headstrong and active leader, and always trying to take charge as soon as possible. I also learned about the other different kinds of leaders, and realized that my friends were all different in their leadership style. I had to step back and let others voice their opinions instead of always expressing mine. I also improved my listening skills by learning to listen and then discuss when others shared their ideas. I feel that I have grown very much as a leader in the past year, especially after I learned that there were many types of leaders. Some are quiet, some are bold, but the most important lesson I learned was that everyone's leadership type was unique.

One of the pieces of advice I would like to share with students working on their Action Plan is to start thinking small, and then expand. Often times, students think of large, broad, grandiose ideas and are disappointed when they realize that they have to narrow it down. It is much easier to start with a small, local idea and then develop it into something broader. Another piece of advice that applied to everyone is to start NOW! I remember my instructor and advisers telling me the exact same thing, and (as many students before me probably did) I thought it did
not apply to me. But in that mindset, I ended up getting caught up in a tidal wave of homework, school, sports, and extracurriculars. I could barely balance that, much less have time to organize my Action Plan. I regret not taking this serious, because I ended up having to reduce the elaborateness of my idea and revert to a simpler idea. To all students: please start now! If you have a great idea (and you all do) then you definitely want to get started on it as soon as possible! Hope it's a great experience!