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Essay Response

My move to Charlotte, North Carolina from Wisconsin offered me the chance to reinvent myself while concurrently allowing me to take advantage of the multitude of opportunities that were previously foreign to me. I am a first-generation American as my parents immigrated just before the turn of the century. Growing up in a Romanian family in the Midwest exposed me to an interesting blend of two different cultures: the traditional Midwestern values of honesty, gratitude, and friendliness, and the typical Eastern European emphasis on dedication, perseverance, and discipline. The Romanian traditions of Name Day, a celebration of one's Eastern Orthodox Christian name, cabbage laden dishes and polenta for Christmas, loud family gatherings on any occasion, and frequent encounters with my relatives across the Atlantic have opened the door to a world beyond my hometown and fundamentally shaped my understanding of life. Moving from rural Wisconsin to cosmopolitan Charlotte my sophomore year prompted tremendous growth through interaction with a more diverse student population in a rigorous academic environment. My new classmates, many of whom were high achieving and motivated, initially intimidated and humbled me as I had clearly underestimated the difficulty of studying at a more competitive high school. I suddenly felt overwhelmed with problems I had never had before, such as integrating with well established groups of friends, being aware of opportunities, understanding teacher expectations, and learning how to use the new databases and grading systems. The school did not provide new students sufficient counseling and assistance with the transition process or explanation on how to obtain more information, and this deficiency in the transition process frustrated me and led to feelings of hopelessness. I was somewhat comforted to realize that many new students were experiencing similar challenges in adapting to the new environment. My initial excitement to explore this large, lively, culturally diverse city waned as I felt choked and stifled by the intensity and confusion of my school. A glimmer of hope presented itself when I joined the tennis team. Having been playing competitively since I was a child, I immediately gained the respect of my peers and was able to meet my friends, Sydney and April, before the start of the school year. Sydney, who was a year older and transferred that year as well, faced an even more daunting task as junior year is arguably the most defining period in high school. Together, we researched the issue and discovered that this phenomenon of feeling lost and alone after moving has been widely studied and coined "transfer shock". Eager to prevent other students from having to emotionally struggle with the adaptation process alone, we established Nova Panthers. The purpose of this club was to smooth the acclimatization process for new students. Through our initiative we were able to create lunch buddy programs, a peer mentor system, school tours, and student support activities in an attempt to facilitate the transition to this singularly difficult school. The small impact that we were able to have on the

lives of some new students at our school made Sydney and I feel that we were genuinely contributing to the student community at Providence High School.

Despite the arduous start in Charlotte, I have never been more grateful for an experience in my life. My move to Providence High School and the challenges that I faced in the process have morphed me into a stronger and more confident person while teaching me invaluable social skills that will follow me throughout my future academic and career endeavors. I am now able to walk into a situation where I am not accustomed with the people or the organization and leave feeling not only accepted, but appreciated for the contributions I have made. The stressful environment of my school has taught me how to adapt to high pressure situations and how to redirect the anxiety and negative emotions into positive accomplishments. The school offers classes that encourage students to think deeper and independently in order to formulate their own interpretation of the text or approach to the problem. Such an approach created an environment where academic excellence was praised and acknowledged not only by our teachers but our peers as well, many of whom strived to be in the top of the class. Rather than being intimidated by the competition, it motivated me to work harder, achieve more, ask questions, and fully understand the material, all aspects that catalyzed my academic career. The most important lesson that I learned through this process is that one can only grow when leaving the comfort zone for unfamiliar territory. My prior mentality of retreating into what I know best has now been fundamentally changed as I seek to constantly push my limits and throw myself into new situations that force me to continually adapt and learn from each new challenge or struggle.

My move during high school created a lasting impression on me. Advice that I would give a student who has just moved would revolve around the central idea that it is necessary to view this transition as an opportunity to grow as opposed to a set back. I would also encourage that he or she reach out for help, take advantage of any available resources, and join clubs or sports of interest as an opportunity to meet and befriend like-minded students. Even though the transition process will be inevitably frustrating, demanding, and at times, seem fruitless, it will be one of the most defining, life changing, and hopefully positive experiences in a young person's life.