After my first full year as President of the Community Service Club at my school (a small group of students who met weekly to organize fundraisers for local non-profits and took fieldtrips monthly to volunteer in local non-profits), I realized that for the vast majority of the student body, community service was a minimal component of students' extracurricular activities—most students did not spend time volunteering beyond their minimum 40 hour graduation requirement. I was curious as to why this was, so in the spring of 2012, before coming to the Brown Leadership Institute, I distributed an anonymous survey, simply asking students who did not participate in community service why not. Their answers surprised me: instead of lack of interest, the overwhelming majority answered that they could not fit volunteering into their busy schedules or would not know how to set up work as a volunteer even if they had free time. Some also believed incorrectly that there was not a need for volunteer work in Boston. My action plan aimed to change the attitudes of students at my school about community service from being a minimal graduation requirement to becoming a meaningful part of student life by addressing the lack of awareness about a need for volunteering and provided students with access to a variety of convenient community service opportunities in the Greater Boston Area by using the Community Service Club. Upon returning from Brown, I created a new mission and goals for my club based on those of my action plan: 1) to connect students to service opportunities in Greater Boston Area that are accommodated by our school schedule and 2) to educate the BB&N community of need in Boston for aid. I also restructured the club's leadership in order to accommodate the new series of programs we would implement to address the goals of my action plan. The first goal was met by offering a series of on- and off-campus community service events, such as fieldtrips to local community centers, nursing homes, shelters, and food pantries. Additionally, we communicated to the school details of upcoming club-hosted events as well as opportunities for volunteer work in local nonprofit organizations (as indicated by their directors). We utilized a variety of new methods including: a club blog, an email list that provided subscribers with frequent announcements and a monthly newsletter, and a new bulletin board that posted current in-print flyers and articles from local organizations. The second goal of my action plan was met by distributing informational articles to students (via the various communication methods previously listed) and also through the organization of all-school assemblies for speaking engagements.

My project did not change much: at Brown, I had drafted plans for the majority of the programs my club initiated throughout the year and we were able to carry out all of the steps I had outlined in my action plan. The goals of my action plan did not change throughout the execution of these steps;

however, my project grew beyond what I had anticipated. A few months into carrying out my action plan, I realized that the new focus on community service at BB&N had begun to connect a divided student body around a common cause—with members from various grades, social groups, and clubs volunteering together in service trips. I added a third goal to my project: to use the growing culture of service at BB&N to build community. The Community Service Club has met this goal by teaming up with many other student groups and clubs in our school for service trips and fundraising projects, and next year we are planning to expand our collaborations by implementing three new community-building projects in addition to repeating our actions from this year.

At the beginning of the school year, I presented my action plan to the current members of my club and formed a leadership team of 6 students, 3 faculty members, and 2 representatives from the Parents Association who were interested in supporting my action plan. Working with such a large support system was vital to the completion of my action plan. In our first months, working together felt clumsy as we navigated communication and defining our separate roles. I decided to treat the club almost like a small nonprofit organization: we met as a team and drafted a new mission statement for our club, as well as specific goals and objectives, using the goals of my action plan as a template. We also outlined specific tasks to be carried out by each member, as prescribed by my action plan. United around a common cause and with clearly defined roles, our team thrived for the rest of the year. While working alone can be beneficial in some situations as it allows a leader to have full control of her project, I believe that collaboration lent itself well to this project. Because of my support system, I was able to accomplish more than I had expected in my original action plan, and developed the useful leadership skill of delegation.

My project has made noticeable changes in my school community as well as in the organizations we serve. Community Service participation at BB&N has risen noticeably. This year we had the greatest participation in club history: club membership tripled, participation in all of our annual school-wide events at least doubled, and participation in all of our new events exceeded our predictions. This year, our club counseled 16 students who had never volunteered before, and successfully set them up with a weekly commitment to a volunteer for the whole year. All reported that they were very satisfied with their placement. Almost a third of the class of 2013 graduated with more than the required 40 hours of service. Due to the extra participation, collectively as a school, we were able to provide approximately 200 more hours of service in the Boston area than we had in 2011-12. Along with our numerous fundraisers and item drives, this service made a tangible difference in many local communities.

Working on my action plan, has taught me first-hand what it means to be a leader. It has given me the opportunity to practice leadership strategies discussed in class at Brown (such as developing listening skills and public speaking skills, and using the four leadership frames) as well as caused me to encounter challenges to which there is no right answer, such as: when working with others, how do you balance maintaining control of your vision with granting those helping you enough authority to carry out their responsibilities. This experience revealed my natural tendencies when placed in a leadership position, such as the fact that I tend to be more "visionary" than "analytical" and has challenged me to constantly self-evaluate, and improve on this weakness as a leader. This project also encouraged me to view myself through the eyes of my peers (those my project affected) and reflect on my own interactions with BB&N and the Boston community, and ensure that I acted as a positive role model of the message I preached.

In drafting my action plan, I had anticipated that student apathy would be an obstacle I would face. I was pleasantly surprised to discover that students were my greatest support group; however, the administration at my school was less supportive than I had anticipated. While they applauded student initiative to help the community, the administration would not officially endorse any of the organizations we benefitted or allow us to use school transportation methods for our club's fieldtrips. We were able to overcome this obstacle due to the help of our faculty advisor and the Parent's Association representatives, who were able to network and enlist the help of other adults in our community to organize transportation and service trip information to families. It was the help of these adults that motivated me to continue working on my action plan, because they gave me the support I needed to overcome these obstacles and make my vision come to fruition. Also, realizing that my efforts made a tangible difference in the lives of both the students at BB&N and those we helped was incredibly inspiring.

My advice to future Leadership Institute students comes from something I learned at the Symposium on Social Action: If you have the opportunity, talk with people your action plan will affect while you are forming it and frequently while implementing it. People rarely like change, so it is best if people feel that any action taken that might cause even the slightest change in their lives is conducted with their full support.

Although I spoke with members of my club and our Faculty Advisor before coming to Brown about my thoughts for an action plan, I believe I was lucky in how enthusiastically the student body received my project. My action plan was based primarily on only my ideas for how to create change in

my school. Fortunately, the plan was successful. But if I were to redo this process, I would have asked many students to help me generate ideas for my action plan. They might have come up with additional solutions I had not considered, or even if they thought of the same ideas that had I planned to implement, as a symbolic leadership strategy it would have showed them that I cared. I also could have investigated if similar clubs exist in neighboring schools, and connected with the leaders of those clubs to seek additional ideas and advice.

My goals of the action plan are complete, but I plan to sustain the changes I have made in my school. Next year, the Community Service Club will continue running all of the programs we have commenced (or adapted) this year under my action plan. We will also implement three new programs: 1) a collaborative service afternoon with the Alumni Association, 2) "The BB&N Community Day"—a community building day that highlights student talent and promotes mutual-appreciation for diverse interests—hosted by the Community Service Club and Shades (the multicultural club), and 3) a multi-club collaboration to benefit a locally-based nonprofit: Alliance for Children.

I have used many of the skills I learned in the Leadership Institute. The public speaking, negotiating, listening skills, and simply how to create an action plan all aided me greatly and are skills I will surely use for the rest of my life. The one skill I learned at Brown that was particularly useful was the concept of the leadership compass. I realized at Brown that my natural leadership direction was the East—"Visionary." Understanding that this would be both a benefit and a hindrance to my success as a leader, I formed a leadership group comprised of students who exhibited the other directions (especially with a few strong "Westerners"—"The Analytical Leaders" in order to utilize our strengths and meet our goals. This year I have really worked to develop my skills in all of the directions and have become more conscious of in what situations it is more advantageous to exhibit a particular direction more prominently than the others.