The paths we take in life tend to make sense only in retrospect. Until recently I had never imagined pursuing philosophy as a vocation. My family valued practicality and piety above all else, and my earliest dream was to live a simple life as a simple preacher. Teenage rebellion, however, shredded the appeal of such a life with the ferocity expected of youthful fantasy. Upon leaving my family for a college, I also left my introspective spiritual interests for particularly fanatic and external physical ones—cellular biology, global geology, and cosmology. Sophomore year I happened, by chance, upon a philosophy of science course; reading Kuhn and Feyerabend has a peculiar effect on headstrong and naive students, and I fell for the whole routine rather hard. I hadn’t lost interest in the world of nature, but rather I gained interest in the world of values. Additional philosophy courses, hours of personal study, founding a student organization, and several years of feeling fulfillment in my work 'sold the deal,' as they say.

Reeling from my shift of interest crisis, I found a nagging question resurfacing in another philosophy course on Plato and Aristotle: how ought one to live? That question continues to connect my scattered undergraduate projects. Dr. Kristin Schaupp (PHIL & REL STDS) at UW-Eau Claire (UWEC) gave a portion of her summer to aid my exploration of social epistemology, a field that addresses what rational agents ought to believe given certain social environments. Under Dr. Schaupp's supervision I completed a project in which I argued against the uniqueness thesis by discussing positions within the epistemological relativism debate. Dr. Brian Woodcock (PHIL & REL STDS) directed my exploration into the metaphysics of personal identity, and I completed a paper under his supervision that critiqued Roderick Chisolm’s account of substance-based personal identity. Given my broad scope interests, I involved myself with ethics and metaethics. Dr. Sean McAleer (PHIL & RELS at UWEC) had me prepare an essay on sentimentalism, in which I presented arguments for and objections to the premises and conclusions of Hume's argument against cognitivism. Looking forward, I will likely continue to hold the question of how one ought to be as the central concern of my
My genuine enjoyment of research shows through in the projects I have undertaken, and I want to continue to enliven the field I love. Recently I’ve spent a substantial portion of my time and energy founding a student philosophy club. Part of my motivation involved the selfish desire to collect individuals who share my passions, but additionally I wanted to improve the social environment of the department that houses the mentors and peers to whom I owe so much. Too often I’ve witnessed persons called to studies such as philosophy stand apart, individualistic and unconcerned with one another. Yet, upon founding the organization, I’ve experienced insistent requests for regular and frequent social events, casual or otherwise. The group has set about planning and arranging weekly movie nights, dinners with professors, and summer reading groups (Nietzsche, Hume and Kant). I want the organization to create a productive environment for anyone interested in philosophical research, to encourage members to pursue publication, and support their attending professional conferences.