

“We Are What We Are Because We Have Been Where We Have Been...”

-Sigmund Freud

Identity development is a lifelong, deeply personal process. As I reflect upon my experiences, four things come to mind: family, competitions, undergraduate opportunities, and interests.

The values passed down from my parents have shaped my beliefs, morals, and habits. As a young child, I learned that my choices had consequences. If I drew on the wall instead of paper with my crayons, I was responsible for cleaning it off. The joy of learning and the value of education were stressed throughout my life. Interactions with my two older brothers taught me grit and mental toughness. When snowboarding, I could beat them to the bottom if I simply went straight down! My family's Golden Retriever “Frankie” has taught me the importance of enjoying the present. When we hike, she takes time to be curious, greet, and to sniff. The thrill of playing fetch never grows old and her capacity to love is enormous.

Competitions taught me that “second chances” are not always available. Yearly solo festival events as a middle/high school flutist offered one chance to deliver an outstanding performance. Sight reading skill tests taught me to control the moment, examine the piece first, and not launch right into playing. Being a nationally competitive teen softball player required focused leadership as a pitcher. Unwavering determination while executing my various pitch types was critical. That same determination would be dialed in when at the plate, giving my best effort to obtain a hit for my team. Disappointing outcomes fueled resilience and were a reminder to continue working hard. Hitting my first Grand Slam at an elite travel tournament in Florida was one of my most triumphant experiences. Hours of practice may not make “perfect”, but they sure can create joy!

Tutoring undergraduate mathematics has exposed me to different learning styles and required me to adapt my communication accordingly. It is rewarding to play a part in student growth. Being a Resident Advisor while balancing a full undergraduate courseload sharpened my time management skills. Facing certain situations as an RA pushed me out of my comfort zone but triggered personal growth as a result. I am grateful to have had an undergraduate internship experience. My internship mentor provided training that gave me confidence in my abilities, taught me to persevere through obstacles along the way, and empowered me to dream big. I hope to keep the cycle of kindness going and one day pay it forward to another aspiring Ph.D. student.

Perhaps my interest in rock climbing is because the sport requires so much problem solving. With an option of hundreds of different routes and thousands of different movements, my brain is exhausted after a session! Failure and falling are inevitable, but the thrill of reaching the top is a major confidence booster. My interest in hiking is because natural beauty makes me feel alive and connected with something bigger than myself. Nambe Lake Trail near Sante Fe, New Mexico is an epic 8-mile hike and not for the faint of heart. One is rewarded with awesome scenery upon reaching the high Alpine glacial lake.

As a graduate student at **XXXX**, I will seek to form meaningful connections with people. Effective communication, healthy boundaries, and respectful interactions will be key. My professional goals are clear, and I have the necessary motivation and determination to achieve them. I will appreciate and take pride in being a part of the **XXX program**.