I learned a lot in the music industry, but that scene really wasn’t for me,” Javier says. “However, I did meet a lot of people in that business, and I realized that what I’m actually interested in is the interaction between humans – exploring the questions surrounding why we do what we do. And philosophy allows me to look for answers.”

Initially, Javier tried to sign up for a philosophy of language course. “That class was overbooked, but I emailed the professor and he eventually let me take the course. That experience in that class just opened the floodgates for me.”

Javier found important mentors in the philosophy department. “I have a good rapport with several professors, one in particular I see almost every day. Our conversations range from 1980s indie noise bands to philosophical debates. He’s always very open, encouraging and helpful. For instance, I wanted to submit a paper to a conference, and he guided me through that. The paper was accepted, and with his help, I got another paper accepted for publication in the Duke University journal of philosophy.”

So, where will all this lead? “Some people ask, ‘what are you going to do with a philosophy major?’ Well, you can do a lot of things. One friend will be going to law school because she’s interested in mediation. Some other friends are headed to medical school. I plan to attend graduate school in a program that blends modern neuroscience and philosophy. For me, it’s really exciting.”

PHILOSOPHY

JAVIER GOMEZ-LAVIN TOOK A ROUND-A-BOUT route to college. Right out of high school, he spent 18 months managing rock bands (one opened for Band of Horses) and studying economics. He wasn’t able to find his calling in those areas, but when he came to the College, he discovered it right away.

“Philosophy is an exciting and challenging discipline because it focuses on some of the deepest and most difficult questions we face: is there any objective standard of moral rightness? Does God exist? Do humans have free will? The methods philosophers use to tackle these questions – imaginative thought and rigorous analysis of arguments – help students to build skills that are essential to a liberal arts education and to many professions.”

This major is important preparation for graduate school, and strong background for careers in law, public administration and education.

Regularly taught courses include “Ethics and Sports,” “Nature, Technology and Society” and “Philosophy and Feminism.”