Penn State Essay:

Please tell us something about yourself, your experiences, or activities that you believe would reflect positively on your ability to succeed at Penn State. This is your opportunity to tell us something about yourself that is not already reflected in your application or academic records. We suggest a limit of 500 words or fewer.

I am an outdoor person, always up for adventure. I have always enjoyed a variety of sports activities - be it basketball in school or table tennis at home with my brother or swimming lessons from my father, but one sport that not only helped me get fitter but also inculcated in me social values effortlessly and unknowingly was cycling.

My hometown is quite small with limited sports and entertainment activities. Indoor games with family and friend like playing chess or games on Xbox or humming the guitar at times were the only leisure activities I could indulge in. The outdoor options were restricted to a club and gymnasium.

Then one day, I saw pictures of the Jalandhar cycling club on social media. It was exciting to see people of all ages actively participating in the activity. Compared to where I live, Jalandhar is a bigger city and not too far away. Drawn to the idea, I looked for a similar club in our city but there was none. That’s when I decided to start a cycling club for my city.

The first three members of the club besides me included my father and my equally enthusiastic younger brother. After having purchased the bicycles and other requisite paraphernalia, we started our first ride early one summer morning. We rested midway or maybe even before that as our bodies not used to the routine were easily tired, but our enthusiasm, the morning fresh air and the sight of rising sun rising in the backdrop of the paddy fields kept us going. We covered a total distance of 25 kilometers that day.

Completing that ride was an overwhelming feeling – a combination of accomplishment and confidence for being able to live up to the challenge as well as of despair and sadness for the poverty I witnessed around me. The impoverished countryside and the general poor state of the people living there made me want to do something to help them and also filled me with gratitude for the fortunate life I lead.

To raise awareness about our cycling club, I started posting pics on social media about our cycling activities. Within a short time, the group grew to a considerable size. Along with the Jalandhar cycling club, we conducted several events that helped raise awareness about fitness through cycling. We were also able to raise money to help the villages with some basic amenities. During our rides, we also sometimes stopped by the villages to interact with the people which was an enriching experience. It taught me the value of simplicity and minimalistic living.

That summer was not just the beginning of the cycling club but also the beginning of the cognizance of the world around me. It helped me develop organizational and leadership skills and also brought out the traits of empathy and gratitude in me.