Warren Kessler
Professor of Philosophy

When Warren Kessler was in high school, he enjoyed exploring the theoretical aspects of a particular subject. In science classes he was more fascinated with the process of finding the solution to a problem, rather than with the solution itself. In political science courses, he was interested in the nature of democracy versus elitism, rather than how the laws were actually made.

Later, as a sophomore at Rutgers, Kessler took his first philosophy course. "I discovered that I was getting a straight dose of the theoretical and critical thinking aspect of various subjects that I had enjoyed," explains Kessler. "It was like getting undiluted thought. Immediately, I was hooked!"
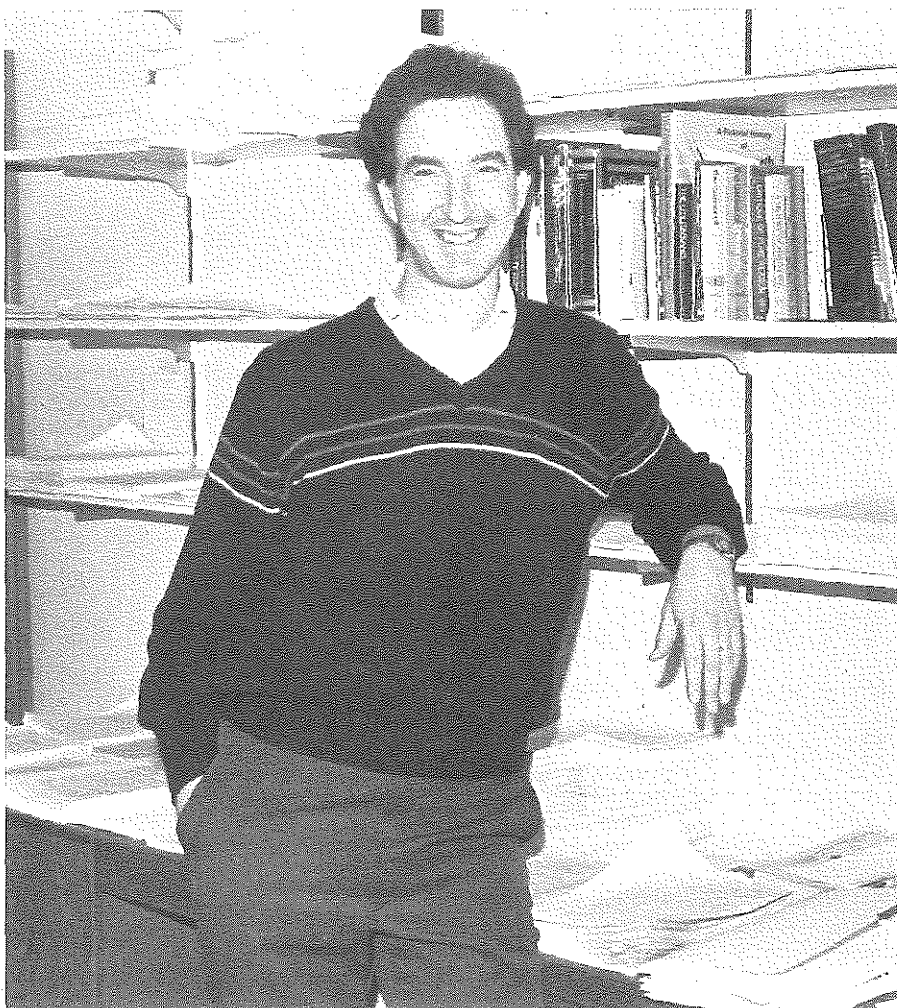
Kessler decided to pursue his philosophy studies in graduate school and transferred to the University of Wisconsin. "I was fortunate to get a teaching-assistant position during my second semester, and that was a rewarding experience," Kessler says. "At that time I began to consider teaching as a career."

During the years of his residency, the University of Wisconsin became one of the major centers for Vietnam war protests. Kessler viewed his involvement in that period as an important part of his moral development. But the extremely cold Wisconsin winters eventually prompted him to seek greener pastures. "I traded in my earmuffs for a surfboard and moved to 'centrally located' Fresno, California," he says jokingly.

Today, Warren Kessler teaches philosophy and ethics courses and is the Coordinator for the Applied Ethics Program at CSU, Fresno.

Q: Where do ethics fit into our advanced, technological society?

A: There was a period of time when both ethics and philosophy were disregarded. Science and technology really took off, and people got carried away as if there were a technological solution to every problem. But folks who have thought about these things know that techniques are means or tools by which people achieve certain ends, and although it's possible to use a tool without considering the end result, it isn't very wise. When we find ourselves with poisoned ground water, and air that we can't breathe, and we're terrified that the weapons we've created could destroy us, we're seeing examples of technology which may have gotten out of hand. In some cases, technology has clearly been used without regard to ends. The theory that ideas which don't fall into a scientifically verifiable mold are meaningless was well respected for 15 to 20 years. But by the early '50s, philosophers raised serious questions about that approach, and people started looking at the consequences of doing business without regard to value. For educated people—whether in or outside the realm of religious tradition—to set ethics on the back burner when they go to work is a terrible and tragic thing that