The four thousand miles that separate New Haven from Kristo Ment’s hometown of Pärnu, Estonia, are trifling compared to the distances he considers in the classroom. An astronomy and physics major, Kristo has searched for specific variable stars in the halo of the Milky Way—extending for hundreds of thousands of light years—to help astronomers better understand the structures of the galaxy.

“What I really like about the astronomy department and Yale in general are the opportunities to learn and become a better scientist that are available to every student every single day,” he says.

Kristo, who participated internationally in science competitions throughout high school, is already taking graduate-level astrophysics courses at Yale and also conducts research in the physics department. The topics appeal to him, as does Yale’s sense of community. “I am amazed at how many of the professors I have talked to genuinely seem to enjoy sharing their expertise and go above and beyond to make themselves available to students,” he says. “This means not only giving us the chance to take well-designed, relevant classes and having good access to research opportunities, but also just breaking down a lot of the structures that can discourage learning and exploration.”

After a summer of research at Germany’s Heidelberg University, Kristo will return to Yale as a junior. While he knows his future work will keep him looking skyward, he’s hesitant to make any fixed plans. “I consider myself an explorer both academically and otherwise,” he says. “I like taking on new adventures and challenges, and I have definitely found plenty of both here at Yale.”

A robust financial aid program brings exceptional students like Kristo to Yale, regardless of their financial circumstances. To learn more about ways to support these students, please visit giving.yale.edu or call 800.395.7646.