

Ellen, James, and Thomas Dillinger

Dear Dillinger Family,

I hope that this letter finds you safe and in good health. I am honored to have been chosen by the department to receive the 2019-2020 Dillinger Award for Teaching Excellence. Thank you for your family's kind donation that makes this award possible. Receiving this award affords me greater freedom as I work towards the completion of my Ph.D. program and continue to help the department offer top-quality instruction in foundational physics to all students at the University of Wisconsin-Madison.

Originally from a suburb of the New York metropolitan area, I migrated to the Midwest to attend college at the University of Chicago. Upon matriculation at University of Wisconsin-Madison, I was grateful to be recognized as a Department Alumni Fellow for 2016-2017. Studying under Prof. Baha Balantekin, I research interdisciplinary approaches to problems in neutrino and mathematical physics.

During my time teaching general physics courses such as Energy (Physics 115) and Physics for the Arts (Physics 109), I enjoyed students' varied passions and interests and was excited to reorganize and upgrade course materials to better fit their needs. In recent months, the department has opened up discussion to improve diversity and inclusion; I hope to share insights from my involvement with a group of incoming freshmen from underrepresented backgrounds to help determine how we may best accommodate all of our students and colleagues.

In the same spirit as Prof. Joseph R. Dillinger, I look forward to sharing my passion for physics education with students of all disciplines here at UW-Madison and wherever my academic pursuits take me next.

Thomas, thank you for your kind email. Circumstances permitting, I hope that we will be able to meet safely during the upcoming Fall Semester.

Sincere thanks,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Michael J. Cervia".

Michael J. Cervia
Ph.D. Candidate in Physics
University of Wisconsin-Madison
cervia@wisc.edu