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## RYAN FISHER EARNS TOP NSF AWARD

FIRST CNU PROFESSOR TO RECEIVE EARLY CAREER SCIENTIST HONOR.

by [Jim Hanchett](#) | March 9, 2021*Above: Dr. Ryan Fisher (center) with students in the LIGO lab.**Read time: about 1 min*

The National Science Foundation (NSF) has awarded Christopher Newport University scientist Ryan Fisher an Early Career Development Program grant, its most prestigious award for early-career faculty.

Fisher is the first Christopher Newport faculty member to earn the distinction. The NSF awards go to select faculty who have “the potential to serve as academic role models in research and education and to lead advances in the mission of their department or organization. Activities pursued by early-career faculty should build a firm foundation for a lifetime of leadership in integrating education and research.”

The \$400,000 grant will support a five-year research project titled “Integrated Gravitational Wave and Multimessenger Astronomy and Education.” Multimessenger astronomy is designed to detect unusual explosions in the sky with both traditional electromagnetic observatories, such as radio telescopes and gamma-ray detection satellites, and gravitational wave detectors, including the Advanced Laser Interferometer Gravitational-wave Observatory (LIGO) and the Advanced Virgo detector.

“This is a remarkable achievement for Dr. Fisher and for the university. It is a testament to the extremely high quality research he conducts,” said Nicole Guajardo, dean of the College of Natural and Behavioral Sciences where Fisher serves on the [Physics, Computer Science and Engineering Department](#) faculty. “Receiving this grant will enable Dr. Fisher to expand opportunities for our students and for outreach to the residents of our community. His work also highlights the excellent research being conducted at Christopher Newport by both Ryan and his faculty

colleagues.”

The grant is an outgrowth of Fisher’s work as part of an international team of scientists, the LIGO-Virgo Scientific Collaboration, that is attempting to better understand neutron stars and black holes and the composition of the universe through the detection of gravitational waves.

Fisher will work with undergraduate and master’s student researchers in conducting searches for gravitational waves and improving the tools used in the pursuit . He also plans to hold a series of events for local residents at the Virginia Living Museum so that they can learn about multimessenger astronomy.

“The award will support the development of a diverse, globally competitive STEM workforce through the engagement of students of all ages at these events,” Fisher said.

He is particularly pleased by the opportunities for Christopher Newport students: “This training will prepare them to become competent scientific researchers able to conduct research at the internationally recognized level as the next generation of gravitational wave astronomers.”

Fisher previously was awarded [a multi-million dollar NSF](#) grant to expand the LIGO collaboration's computational infrastructure to facilitate the detection of gravitational waves. Before joining Christopher Newport in 2018, Fisher was affiliated with Syracuse University for six years. He earned his doctorate from Princeton University and undergraduate degrees from the University of Maryland. He is a 2016 recipient of the Special Breakthrough Prize in Fundamental Physics. This prestigious award recognizes individuals who have made profound contributions to human knowledge.

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