

Claire May & William Band Distinguished Professorship in Physics



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VIVIENNE BALDASSARE

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A rising star in the field of astrophysics, Vivienne Baldassare is particularly interested in understanding how supermassive black holes form, grow, and influence the galaxies where they occur. By searching for and studying the smallest supermassive black holes, she gains clues to the lives of black holes—regions of space with gravitational fields so intense that no radiation or matter can escape.

Before she joined the WSU faculty in fall 2020, she was a NASA Einstein Postdoctoral Fellow at Yale University and led the discovery of the smallest of the then-known supermassive black holes. Since earning her doctoral degree in 2017, she has attracted more than \$450,000 in external funds, including Chandra X-ray Observatory and Hubble Space Telescope grants, to support her work.

In addition to black holes, Baldassare's research and teaching interests include nuclear star clusters and transient and variable astrophysical phenomena. She utilizes a variety of telescopes and surveys and works with large, complex data sets and images to answer questions in theoretical and applied physics and to solve truly astronomical problems.

Baldassare strives to inspire her students and others to tackle tough challenges and to explore careers in science. As a woman in a traditionally male-dominated STEM field, she seeks to build a more inclusive astronomy community. The author or coauthor of dozens of articles in the top publication for her field, she enjoys teaching and community outreach to make science more accessible to all.



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