

Academic Statement of Purpose

U-M LSA Physics

Ethan Snyder

My Path to the University of Michigan

As a first-generation college student from a family of six living near the poverty line, I was never encouraged to excel—my parents just wanted me to pass. I owe my academic success to a supportive school district and teachers who saw my potential early on, despite my behavioral issues in elementary school. With their guidance, I joined accelerated classes in middle school, ultimately graduating high school with college credits. My home wasn't an encouraging environment, so I feel incredibly fortunate to have had the support to discover my passion for science and pursue higher education.

During my freshman year at WMU, my parents divorced, and the divorce turned messy. In addition to being a full-time student and working part-time, I had to make time to appear in court as a witness, help my family clean and move out of our childhood home, and handle other family obligations. As my family and I distanced ourselves from my dad, we also parted with the last of the financial stability that he provided. This forced me into adulthood all at once and made it hard to prioritize my education. The effect of this period on my transcript is apparent, but also apparent is my resilience. When I emerged from this difficult period, I hit the ground running: I added a math major and a computer science minor to my degree, moved into an apartment near campus, began assisting with research (both the accelerator work and the semiconductor research, the latter of which I continue today), and co-founded Physics Club. I'm comforted having proven to myself that I can handle anything, whether that be trauma in my family and personal life or the 18-credit-hour semesters that followed. This same persistence and motivation guarantees my full effort towards succeeding at U-M.

These experiences have driven my decision to pursue a graduate degree at the University of Michigan, because I am drawn to Michigan's commitment to academic rigor, fostering diverse, underrepresented perspectives, and giving opportunity to those who need it most. These are values I've embraced throughout my journey, and values that have previously enabled me to get to where I am today. I look forward to building on my research foundation and becoming part of a community that prioritizes growth, resilience, and inclusivity.