

CCSU
DEPARTMENT OF MATHEMATICAL SCIENCES

COLLOQUIUM

Friday, April 20
2:00 – 3:00 PM
Maria Sanford, Room 101

EULER AND THE TALE OF THE TWO GAMMAS

ED SANDIFER

WESTERN CONNECTICUT STATE UNIVERSITY

ABSTRACT

Euler didn't name them, but he left us with two different things we now call “gamma.” There's Gamma the function, that generalizes the factorial numbers, and there's gamma the constant, that measures the difference between the natural logarithm and the sum of the harmonic series. Though separated at birth, they were born from the same problem, a now-forgotten challenge called “interpolation of series.” I'll describe the times in which this problem was born, and what Euler contributed to its solution.

Students who have seen the picture that goes with a Riemann sum, or who have heard of the trapezoid rule will understand almost all of this talk, but at the same time, even someone who has been teaching university mathematics for 40 years will learn something new.

For further information:

gotchevi@ccsu.edu 860-832-2839
castanedan@ccsu.edu 860-832-2851