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CONTACT: Mark D. Weinstein
Executive Director of Public Relations
[937-766-8800](tel:937-766-8800) (o)
[937-532-6885](tel:937-532-6885) (m)
Mweinstein@cedarville.edu
@cedarvillenews

Cedarville Aims to Raise Veteran Graduation Rate

CEDARVILLE, OHIO – Across the country, universities see a high dropout rate among their veteran populations. Upon arrival, veterans face numerous hardships on college campuses including loneliness and isolation. Their unique experiences divide them from the community atmosphere of college life. Cedarville University is addressing this issue by creating a military support group, led by professional pharmacy student and veteran Ankit Pandav.

Pandav served six years in the Army National Guard, including a tour in Afghanistan. When he reached Cedarville, he noticed a missed connection between veterans' transitions to college life and the general student population.

"The transition is hard," said Pandav. "We feel very out of place. In the military, we have the mentality of taking care of the guy next to us at all times. At school, it's a completely different lifestyle. The community at Cedarville is a great thing for veterans; we just need to extend it to meet them where they are."

To address this problem, Pandav decided to create a military support group to bring together current or veteran servicemen and women who are at Cedarville.

The organization will strive to meet the need for community among veterans on campus in three specific ways. The group will create a "battle buddy" system among peers in the organization so each member has a partner to look out for and hold accountable. Pandav also hopes to develop a mentorship program between older veterans and members of the organization. Finally, the organization plans to have a specific place for organization members to meet and support each other.

"At this point, we're just trying to get the word out to other veterans," said Pandav. "We've had so much support from faculty members, as well as pharmacy and nursing students. I pitched the idea, and they made it happen."

"I believe the program is meeting an unmet need in the community," said organization adviser Dr. Ginger Cameron, assistant professor of pharmacy practice. "We have a lot of veterans in the area, and this organization will provide a venue by which we can show our appreciation to them for their service to our country."

Located in southwest Ohio, Cedarville University is an accredited, Christ-centered, Baptist institution with an enrollment of 3,760 undergraduate, graduate, and online students in more than 100 areas of study. Founded in 1887, Cedarville is recognized nationally for its authentic Christian community, rigorous academic programs, strong graduation and retention rates, accredited professional and health science offerings, and leading student satisfaction ratings. For more information about the University, visit www.cedarville.edu.