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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
[@cedarvilleneews](https://twitter.com/cedarvilleneews)

Decisions Expected to Advance Cedarville University's Impact

CEDARVILLE, OHIO – One day before Cedarville University graduated its largest class in the institution's history, the board of trustees approved several key initiatives that will continue to advance the university's mission and impact.

Major actions included affirming both a new vision statement and strategic plan, appointing a vice president for advancement, creating the Center for Biblical Apologetics and Public Christianity, enhancing Master of Science in Nursing program options, approving seven new faculty members and constructing a new residence hall.

Vision Statement and Strategic Plan

The university's yearlong planning process culminated with board approval of both a strategic plan and new vision statement. The vision statement articulates the aspirations and priorities of the institution and sets the trajectory for Cedarville for years to come. The new statement reads:

Cedarville University will be an exemplary Christian Institution known for commitment to academic excellence, submission to biblical authority, passion for the Great Commission, and intentional discipleship that transforms lives for godly service, vocational distinction, and cultural engagement.

The strategic plan — jointly developed by a strategic planning committee and senior leadership — identified five core values of the institution— biblical authority, comprehensive education, godly service, transformed lives and faithful stewardship. Each flows from the new vision statement. These values will be implemented around five core strategies — academic excellence, Gospel impact, institutional sustainability, program innovation and vibrant community. The final three-to-five-year strategic plan is expected to be announced prior to the start of the 2016-17 academic year.

Vice President for Advancement

Richard J. Melson, Ph.D. was approved as Cedarville University's next vice president for advancement. Melson will replace Dave Bartlett, who as interim vice president led the university to a strong fundraising year in 2015-16.

Melson brings more than 20 years of professional fundraising and transformational leadership to Cedarville's leadership team and, specifically, the advancement division. He announced his resignation at Houghton College on Monday, May 9, and will begin his new responsibilities at Cedarville on July 1, 2016.

At Houghton College, Melson provided leadership to the institution's current \$70 million campaign. This campaign has seen the highest giving in college history with more than \$34.1 million given in the past four years, more than the previous seven years of giving combined. Melson and his team recently raised more than \$1.1 million in one day, with 1,737 donors giving during a One Day Giving Challenge. He also served as president and CEO of the William J. Houghton Foundation in his most recent position.

Melson earned his doctoral degree in leadership studies from Dallas Baptist University. He holds a Master of Church Music from The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary and a Bachelor of Arts in music from Murray State University.

Center for Biblical Apologetics and Public Christianity

The Center for Biblical Apologetics and Public Christianity is an outgrowth of the university's core values and strategies. Dan DeWitt, Ph.D., formerly the dean at Boyce College in Louisville, Kentucky, was approved by the trustees as a faculty member and will also lead the new center.

"The Lord has been gracious to Cedarville University by leading a godly scholar of DeWitt's caliber, who can discuss apologetics and worldview at the highest level while communicating clearly and training new believers in the faith," said Dr. Thomas White, president. "We are honored to have DeWitt join the team."

The mission of the Center is to prepare believers in Jesus Christ to engage culture with the Gospel that is grounded in God's biblical revelation of Himself as creator, sustainer, savior and sovereign King. Through the Center, DeWitt will bring apologetics conferences and events to campus, while engaging the culture from a biblical worldview.

DeWitt, who will serve as associate professor of applied theology and apologetics, earned his doctoral and Master of Divinity degrees from The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. Most recently he was associate professor of worldview and culture and dean at SBTS.

DeWitt has published two theological and apologetic monographs, along with numerous articles and essays in print and digital media. His blog posts are circulated by various sites, including the Gospel Coalition.

Master of Science in Nursing

In response to growing demand for its Master of Science in Nursing program, the school of nursing requested and received trustee approval to add a new nurse educator track, move the program fully online, reduce program hours, and add additional start terms. The M.S.N. now provides three advanced nursing practice tracks: family nurse practitioner, global public health nursing and the new nurse educator program. All changes are effective with the fall 2016 term.

Faculty Appointments

The trustees approved seven faculty appointments. They include:

- **Nathan Averbeck, M.A. (ABD)**, instructor of mathematics

Averbeck will receive his doctoral degree this summer from Baylor University. He also holds a Master of Arts in mathematics from Eastern Illinois University and a bachelor's degree from Cedarville University.

- **Daniel DeWitt, Ph.D.**, associate professor of applied theology and apologetics
- **Michael Mendel, Ph.D.**, professor of zoology

Mendel earned his doctoral degree in biological sciences from the University of Maine (Orono). His master's degree in experimental statistics and entomology is from New Mexico State University, and he has a bachelor's degree from Humboldt State University. Since 2000 he has been a professor of biology at Mount Vernon Nazarene University.

- **Mark Owens, Ph.D.**, assistant professor of New Testament theology

Owens completed his doctoral degree at the University of Aberdeen in Scotland and a Master of Divinity from Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary. He graduated from the University of Georgia with a B.S.C. degree. He most recently worked at Luther Rice College and Seminary as assistant professor of New Testament.

- **Rebekah Priebe, M.A.**, instructor of theater
Priebe is currently finishing her Master of Fine Arts at The Ohio State University. She graduated with a B.A. in English/drama from Friends University and an M.A. in theater from Kansas State University.

- **Lisa Smithers, RN, M.S.N.**, assistant professor of nursing

Smithers completed her Master of Nursing in midwifery from Ohio State University and a Bachelor of Science in Nursing from Wright State University. Since 2009 she has been on the faculty at Wright State University.

- **Felisha Younkin, Ph.D.**, assistant professor of psychology

Younkin earned her doctoral degree and master's degree in human development and family science (with a specialization in couple and family therapy) from Ohio State University. Her undergraduate degree is in international studies from Miami University of Ohio. She is a licensed marriage and family therapist and currently works at Nationwide Children's Hospital in Columbus.

New Residence Hall

The new residence hall will be a \$3.3 million, 64-bed facility located near the university's townhouses along the eastern edge of campus. Four 16-person units will provide students with the best living-learning and discipleship environment. The new residence will replace Faith Hall, a 42-year-old former Army barracks that will be razed in 2017.

Located in southwest Ohio, Cedarville University is an accredited, Christ-centered, Baptist institution with an enrollment of 3,711 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.