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Traveler, Inventor and UN Ambassador Wins Freshman Class Presidency

CEDARVILLE, OHIO -- Before reaching Cedarville University's campus in August, freshman Rufus Mathew, a computer engineering student from Bahrain, had already spent a year traveling India, developed an Android app and was the youngest representative to the U.N. Youth Assembly, the youth equivalent of the international assembly.

During this time, he was also searching for where he would attend college. He diligently ranked dozens of colleges in several countries based on the information he could find online. Cedarville always appeared in the top rankings.

"I chose Cedarville for three reasons," said Mathew. "First, they have an amazing engineering program that is nationally ranked; second, the faculty and student reviews I read said that Christ was in the center of everything on campus, not just hidden in the corner; and finally, there were good scholarships. God blessed me with the exact amount I would need to attend the school."

Mathew had always been interested in making things. He participated in robotics in high school and loved the idea of science and engineering. During his gap year before attending Cedarville, Mathew developed an Android app called Suitis, a platform to connect freelancers with project work.

In 2016, at the age of 17, Mathew applied for and was chosen to represent India to the U.N. Youth Assembly, and was one of the youngest people chosen. During his visit, he also competed in the first International Model U.N. Conference (IIMUN) in the U.N. headquarters and won second place in his council. After his work there, he was invited to intern with the U.N., but had to decline. He is currently in the reapplication process to intern with the U.N. for summer 2019.

Mathew originally planned to major in international studies, but found Cedarville's new cybersecurity program intriguing after it received special recognition from the National Security Agency (NSA).

"Rufus is a very exuberant person, with a ready smile; in many ways, he comes across as a personal friend even if you have only just met him," said Dr. Glen Duerr, associate professor of international studies. "Rufus is gifted academically with a wide variety of scholastic skills. Most notably, his expertise in both computer science and international relations showcases a person with significant crossover skills and the strong possibility for analytical sophistication."

Mathew's main goal is to be an international civil servant through the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) or the United Nations Refugee Agency (UNHCR). He hopes to work as a professional officer in communications, serving as the contact between relief centers and the United Nations.

"Rufus is an outstanding young man with great leadership potential," said Brenda Reid, coordinator of international student services. "His enthusiasm and eagerness to engage with his peers and in all that campus has to offer is refreshing to see. He is a gifted communicator who thinks deeply and critically, but engages others with humble sincerity. I'm confident he will make an impact in his time here at Cedarville and beyond."

In high school, Mathew served as the vice head boy (similar to student body vice president in the United States) for his school and then head boy (student body president). Once on Cedarville's campus, he met Ryan Smith, president of the Student Government Association, and heard about the opportunities on freshman class council. He decided to run and two weeks later was elected president.

"Rufus has displayed a passion for others and a desire to get involved since arriving on campus," said Logan Stringfield, Cedarville's senior class president. "I have been amazed at how quickly Rufus has thrived at Cedarville as he is in a completely new environment. He truly resembles a joyful spirit and is eager to serve all of those around him."

Aside from his work as freshman class president, Mathew is involved with the debate team; the honors association; the Multicultural and International Student Organization (MISO) and Mu Kappa, the international organizations on campus; and International Friendships, Inc (IFI), a nonprofit organization that fosters friendships between Christian college students and international students.

"Cedarville University is the best place I could be," said Mathew. "When I applied, I did not expect to be this engaged, but I love being involved. The people I met here have changed my life. As an international student, I can truly say that I am at home here."

Located in southwest Ohio, Cedarville University is an accredited, Christ-centered, Baptist institution with an enrollment of 4,193 undergraduate, graduate, and online students in more than 150 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.