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Trustees Focus on Mission, Comprehensive Campaign, and New Physician Assistant Program

CEDARVILLE, OHIO -- Advancing the institution and expanding graduate programs were the focus of the Cedarville University Board of Trustees at its annual spring meeting May 3, 2019. Trustees approved new mission and vision statements, five new graduate programs and 10 faculty members, while also moving forward on a comprehensive fundraising initiative that would expand the university's infrastructure, fund scholarships, and advance academic and student life initiatives.

Approved Mission and Vision Statements

Trustees unanimously approved a new mission and vision statement for the university. The new mission statement is "Cedarville University transforms lives through excellent education and intentional discipleship in submission to biblical authority." The University's historic motto "For the Word of God and the Testimony of Jesus Christ" will now serve as the official vision statement.

With the revised statements, Cedarville University continues its commitment to undergraduate and graduate students to strategically and intentionally prepare graduates for godly service and vocational distinction.

Comprehensive Fundraising Campaign

Cedarville's approved master plan gained additional strength as the trustees unanimously endorsed a five-year comprehensive fundraising campaign, the first in the institution's history. This campaign, once fully developed, will help the university construct new buildings, increase student scholarships, build upon its endowment, and ensure the Cedarville Experience, which includes Global Outreach missions opportunities, continues.

Launching a PA Program, Expanding Master's Options

Trustees approved the development of a Master of Science in Physician Assistant Studies and three Master of Arts programs in biblical counseling, biblical leadership and worship and theology. A graduate certificate in worship leadership will also be added, pending external approvals.

The proposed physician assistant (PA) program is a perfect fit for Cedarville, which also has one of the leading nursing schools and pharmacy schools in Ohio. The PA program, slated to begin May 2022 pending all necessary external approvals, will complement the university's already-strong presence in health care.

The Cedarville PA program will become the 13th in Ohio, and third in the Miami Valley (University of Dayton and Kettering College). Physician assistants are in high demand, helping fill a crucial need for primary care providers. According to the Market Demand Report and Feasibility Study conducted by the University, the PA profession is expected to grow 37% by 2026. There are only four Christian universities currently offering the program.

“The PA program fits well with our commitment to equip students for godly service and vocational distinction,” said Dr. Thomas White, president. “Healthcare providers care for the whole person — mind, body, and spirit — and have unique opportunities to share the Gospel as they compassionately care for patients in times of need. The PA program will be an excellent addition to the strong healthcare array Cedarville already offers.”

The 24 or 27-month program will be cohort-based, with the last 12 months spent in clinical rotations.

Inaugural PA Program Director Named

With the decision to start the PA program, trustees approved the hiring of Jason Grahame, a 1999 graduate of Cedarville University, to serve as its founding director. Grahame is currently associate professor and associate program director for the physician assistant program at Eastern Virginia Medical School.

Grahame, who has been a practicing physician assistant at Jordan-Young Institute in Virginia Beach, Virginia, since 2003, earned a Master of Physician Assistant degree from Eastern Virginia Medical School, and his Bachelor of Arts degree in athletic training from Cedarville.

New Faculty Members

Finally, the Board of Trustees approved the following individuals to join the university faculty this fall:

Joshua Bowman, M.Div., instructor of missions and theology

Bowman will complete his doctoral degree this summer from Southern Baptist Theological Seminary (SBTS). He earned his Master of Divinity degree in international missions from SBTS, and a bachelor’s degree in business administration from Jacksonville University. Since 2002, he has served as a board member for International Mission.

Jason Grahame, MPA, PA-C, associate director of physician assistant studies/program director

Grahame earned his Master of Physician Assistant degree from Eastern Virginia Medical School and a bachelor’s degree in athletic training from Cedarville University. Since 2003, he has been a practicing physician assistant at Jordan-Young Institute in Virginia Beach, Virginia. He is also the associate professor and associate program director for the physician assistant program at Eastern Virginia Medical School.

George Landon, Ph.D., professor of computer science

Landon earned his doctoral degree and bachelor’s degree in computer science from the University of Kentucky. Since 2007, he has been a faculty member at Eastern Kentucky University.

Steven Meacham, M.A., associate professor of criminal justice

Meacham earned a master's degree in criminal justice from the University at Albany, State University of New York, and is a graduate of the New York State Police Academy. Since 1987, Meacham served as a New York State Trooper, Bureau of Criminal Investigations investigator and a police academy instructor.

Eric Mishne, M.A., assistant professor of communication

Mishne earned master's degrees in communication studies from Ohio University and Western Michigan University. His bachelor's degree in communication is from Cedarville University. Since 2016, Mishne worked as the assistant forensics coach at Ohio University.

Sean O'Connor, M.F.A., assistant professor of broadcasting, digital media and journalism

O'Connor earned his Master of Fine Arts degree, a master's degree in communications and a bachelor's degree in media communication from Asbury University. Since 2015, he has worked as a freelance videographer and editor for The Christian and Missionary Alliance.

Jonathan Sabo, M.F.A., professor of theatre

Sabo earned a Master of Fine Arts degree from Wayne State University and his bachelor's degree in English from Bethel College in Mishawaka, Indiana. Since 2009, Sabo has been a faculty member at Northwestern College, Orange, Iowa.

Brandon Smith, M.A., assistant professor of theology and New Testament

Smith is expected to complete his doctoral degree in theology and New Testament in 2020 from Ridley College of Melbourne, Australia. He earned a master's degree in theological and biblical studies from Criswell College, and a bachelor's degree from Dallas Baptist University. Smith has been an adjunct professor of Christian studies at California Baptist University since 2015. He was an adjunct professor of Biblical studies at Union University in 2019.

Cristi Killingsworth Vallejos, M.S., assistant professor of Spanish

Vallejos will complete her doctoral degree in Spanish linguistics from Georgetown University in June. She holds a master's degree in Spanish linguistics from Georgetown and a bachelor's degree in literatures and cultures from Illinois State University. Since 2014, she has been a faculty member at Georgetown University.

Tianhong Zhang, Ph.D., instructor of education

Zhang earned her doctoral degree in cultural foundations of education from Kent State University, and she holds master's degrees in instructional technology and social foundations of education from the University of Akron. Zhang received her bachelor's degree in English language education from Xinjiang Normal University. Since 2017, she has been a faculty member at Kent State.

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, including its doctor of pharmacy program, 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.