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From Pomp and Circumstance to the U.S. Senate

CEDARVILLE, OHIO -- For Michael Wilt, landing his first job after college culminates a lifelong passion.

Wilt, a 2019 graduate of Cedarville University, was hired in May as the southwest staff assistant for the office of U.S. Sen. Rob Portman (R-Ohio). Wilt began his duties June 3.

His job includes coordinating the schedules of office personnel, answering phone calls and emails from constituents, managing the senator's intern program and handling the behind-the-scenes support for the senator's involvement in various public events.

"I got interested in politics in 2008 when I was 11 years old," Wilt explained. "I plugged into the presidential campaign and did a lot of volunteering, and that really fueled my passion for public policy and politics."

Wilt came to Cedarville in 2015 as a freshman and at first pursued a degree in education. But he quickly found the calling to public service too compelling to ignore and switched his major to political science.

Although barely a couple weeks into his job, Wilt has already been involved in planning several events, including a workforce development program graduation for women who had been incarcerated. "It was a great and inspiring moment, to see someone get a second chance and have the proper skills to go back into the workforce," he said. "Sen. Portman was the commencement speaker, and this is something he's personally advocated and worked on legislation for."

Wilt's path to the senator's staff began with Cedarville's D.C. Semester program in fall 2017. During this term, Cedarville students take classes from a Cedarville history and government professor while also interning in the nation's capital. Wilt interned with then Speaker of the U.S. House of Representatives Paul Ryan.

"I met Sen. Portman a couple times during the 2012 presidential election when he stopped in my hometown (Washington Court House, Ohio)," Wilt said. "During the D.C. semester, I went to his office for Buckeye Coffee when he meets with constituents. I met him and thanked him for his service."

Then in fall 2018, he attended a Cedarville career fair and spoke with a staff member who was recruiting interns. "She took my resume and cover letter, and it was a good connection," Wilt explained.

When Wilt's current position was listed as a job opening on Cedarville's Jobs 4 Jacket website, he reached out to the same staff member and expressed his interest.

“The career fair got the ball rolling for me to get an interview,” he said. “I had that prior connection with Sen. Portman’s office. I felt more confident to take on this role. I was interviewed in May, had a follow-up interview later in May, and now I’m here. It was a quick turnaround, and it’s been great.”

Dr. Glen Duerr, assistant professor of international studies, witnessed Wilt getting ready for this opportunity. “As a member of the Model United Nations team, he traveled to New York to participate in an international competition negotiating with hundreds of other students from around the world,” he said. “As a student of mine on the D.C. Semester, he interned for Speaker Paul Ryan and rubbed shoulders with numerous political leaders. He learned the inner workings of Congress.

“Throughout his Cedarville University education, Michael took advantage of numerous opportunities to position himself for success.”

Dr. Mark Caleb Smith, professor of political science and director of the Center for Political Studies, expressed great confidence in Wilt. “Michael Wilt is the product of hard work and the maximum use of opportunities as they arise,” he noted. “I have little doubt he will do well in Sen. Portman's office, and he will represent Cedarville and Christ well as he serves there.”

“Cedarville prepared me extremely well to jump in and make a difference in my field,” Wilt added. “The history and government professors pushed us and challenged us to become not only excellent students, but excellent workers. I’m excited about what’s next.”

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 the [Bachelor of Arts in political science](#), 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.