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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)

New Club Offers Korean Culture Education

CEDARVILLE, OHIO -- COVID changed a lot of plans during 2020, including study-abroad opportunities. One Cedarville University student saw this as an opportunity to learn about a different culture, leading to a new student organization.

Michael Cleverley, a sophomore broadcasting, digital media and journalism major from Frenchburg, Kentucky, also has a minor in Asian studies. He was initially interested in Chinese culture, taking Mandarin for college credit, and signing up for a Global Outreach trip scheduled for summer 2020.

Back in the spring of 2020, Cleverley first learned he could take mandarin at Cedarville and started pursuing a minor in Asian studies. He joined a team of students through the global outreach department to begin scheduling a trip to China. That trip, because of COVID-19, was canceled. This past fall, Cleverley had hopes to study abroad in China for the summer of 2021, but that trip was also canceled due to the virus.

"I still wanted to go abroad this summer and I needed to take a language to fulfil my Asian language requirement for my minor, so I started looking at other countries," said Cleverley. "I began learning more about Korean language and culture through exploring language learning apps, watching Korean-dramas and listening to more K-pop (Korean pop music)," said Cleverley.

As he was checking out Korean study-abroad programs, he fell in love with Korean culture and discovered there were many others at Cedarville with a similar interest.

He organized the club and held elections for positions in the fall, including Linda Soriano, a freshman computer science major from Springfield, Ohio, as president; Hannah Flowers, a freshman visual communication design major from Kenton, Ohio, as vice president; Danielle Edwards, a freshman forensic science major from Marysville, Ohio, as treasurer; Michael Cleverley as communication officer; and Hannah Board, a senior linguistics major from Millbury, Ohio, as advisor to the president.

Soriano has fallen deeply in love with Korean culture.

"One week we had a karaoke night, and another night a presentation on the Korean alphabet and in the near future we hope to do a presentation on table manners and we will include information on how to use chopsticks," she said. "In Korean and Japanese cultures, respect is a big thing. You're not allowed to eat until the oldest person eats first. The youngest has to serve the oldest a drink out of respect, which I think is really cool that they hold the older generation to that level," she said.

The club hopes to offer hands-on activities that help educate students about Korean culture.

“It’s cool to learn about other cultures and languages, and if you learn something from another culture, you can possibly integrate that into your own life,” said Soriano.

Located in southwest Ohio, Cedarville University is an accredited, Christ-centered, Baptist institution with an enrollment of 4,550 undergraduate, graduate, and online students in more than 150 areas of study. Founded in 1887, Cedarville is one of the largest private universities in Ohio, recognized nationally for its authentic Christian community, rigorous academic programs, including the [Bachelor of Arts in International Studies](#) program, strong graduation, and retention rates, accredited professional and health science offerings, and high student engagement ranking. For more information about the University, visit www.cedarville.edu.

Written by Lauren McGuire