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Professor Named President of Religious Communication Association

CEDARVILLE, OHIO -- Religion is important in understanding how societies operate and communicate. And yet, according to [Dr. Andrew Harris](#), associate professor of [communication](#) at Cedarville University, many scholars in the communication discipline often overlook religion's role in the communication process.

Harris has been active with the Religious Communication Association (RCA), an organization of scholars seeking to understand how communication and religion intersect, since 2009. As a result of his 13 years of involvement, Harris was recently named RCA president, a role he will hold until November 2022.

The RCA includes members from a variety of Christian denominations, plus practitioners of other religions, as well as agnostics and atheists. What unites them is a desire to better understand the role of religion in communication.

"The RCA is an organization where I can be very open about who I am and in whom I've placed my faith," Harris said. "We're given the opportunity to disagree and to share our particular perspectives on the important things that are happening at that intersection of communication and religion."

Harris joined RCA after a professor encouraged him to submit a paper to a conference. Harris had only been a communication scholar for a year, and his paper was accepted at the 2009 RCA Annual Conference, where he met a variety of mentors and friends. After years of involvement, he began looking for opportunities to give back, and he was encouraged to serve on the organization's executive council. He joined that body in 2016 and served there until 2019, reviewing and presenting awards for research and published works.

In 2019, Harris was elected to the four-year presidential track, and he is currently serving as president.

As president, Harris hopes to put the organization's archives online, begin a branding redesign and aid the two current vice presidents as they complete their work. Next year, as immediate past president, he will advise the president and prepare the slate of candidates to be elected to the four-year presidential track.

Harris also wants to use his role as president to maintain an open, mutually respectful atmosphere in the organization at a time when open discourse is becoming more difficult.

"If we don't welcome healthy debate and sharing of ideas among people from various walks of life, we run the risk of failing to understand what our culture is and where it's going," he said. "In this kind of environment, Christians can use our talents to make an impact."

Located in southwest Ohio, Cedarville University is an accredited, Christ-centered, Baptist institution with an enrollment of 4,715 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 communication program](#), strong graduation and retention rates, accredited professional and health science offerings and high student engagement ranking. For more information about the University, visit [cedarville.edu](#).

Written by Bryson Durst.

Photo Cutlines:

Caption (A): Dr. Andrew Harris speaking at a meeting of the Religious Communication Association.

Captions (B-C): Dr. Andrew Harris, associate professor of communication at Cedarville University, was recently named president of the Religious Communication Association. Photo by Scott Huck, Cedarville University.