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Excellence on Display with Fulbright Scholar, Visually Impaired Student at 119th Commencement

CEDARVILLE, OHIO – Cedarville University will hold its 119th commencement on Saturday, May 2, with 745 students earning undergraduate or graduate degrees. The event will be held in the Doden Field House beginning at 10 a.m. Dr. Thomas White, president, will deliver the commencement address.

Of the graduates, 702 are from the undergraduate program. The 43 graduate students completed degrees in Master of Ministry, Master of Business Administration, Master of Education, and Master of Science in Nursing. Next year Cedarville will award degrees for the first time to its Doctor of Pharmacy students.

Two undergraduate students especially reflect the academic quality and personal integrity of the graduates. Katie Goehring, from the Columbus, Ohio, suburb of Reynoldsburg, became the first Cedarville student to be awarded a Fulbright Scholarship. She will earn a bachelor’s degree in Christian ministries (with highest honors) and then travel to Germany for a yearlong study opportunity in Hessen. Andrew Wiseman, Ph.D., professor of Spanish, received a Fulbright in 2004 as a faculty member.

“Kathryn is an excellent example of a Cedarville student prepared to take on the world; she has a deep desire to understand and help others,” said Wiseman. “This is a huge academic honor for her that will open up many doors in the future.”

Another Columbus-area student, Rachel Zeiter, has excelled academically in her pursuit of a degree in special education (with honors) — without the benefit of vision. Zeiter, from Worthington, came
to Cedarville University in August 2011 with very limited eyesight, which has lessened since her freshman year.

Her lack of vision hasn’t deterred her from accomplishing great things — on or off campus. Prior to the start of her senior year, she went tandem skydiving, and with graduation on Saturday, she is poised to begin a career helping students with special needs.

“Rachel is a great example of someone who has overcome an obstacle in a significant way,” said Marcy Van Meter, disabilities compliance coordinator in The Cove, Cedarville’s academic enrichment center. “She forges ahead and is exceptionally bright and talented. We can all learn a lot from her.”

Along with some assistance from The Cove, Zeiter used an orientation mobility specialist to teach her the way around campus. Zeiter takes her tests at The Cove, but with audio books and devices helping her with learning and daily communication, she has blended in with the study body. The only thing that sets her apart is a cane she uses to navigate around campus.

Her love for others is contagious as she flashes her bright smile while reliving past experiences.

“I know that I’ve had challenges in life, but these challenges will help me in the classroom with my students,” said Zeiter. “God puts us in experiences so we can learn from them and connect better with people.”

Zeiter was born with Peters Anomaly, a cornea disease, and later developed secondary glaucoma. She hasn’t been able to see out of her right eye since she was in kindergarten, and her left eye’s vision has deteriorated in the past few years.

The university will honor several students for their academic accomplishments. Two students, to be announced at the ceremony, will receive the President’s Trophy, while eight students will be presented with the Faculty Scholarship Award for achieving a perfect grade point average. Those students include the following:
Christian Aric Caroll  Bachelor of Science in pharmaceutical sciences
Joella Ruth Gerber  Bachelor of Arts in psychology
Andrew Bryan Gutberlet  Bachelor of Arts in Christian education
Shane Daniel Johnson  Bachelor of Arts in chemistry
Jennifer Joy Knepel  Bachelor of Science in molecular and cellular biology
Abby Lynne Sherman  Bachelor of Science in social work
Kelsey Marie Weir  Bachelor of Science in nursing
David Aaron Yoder  Bachelor of Science in biology

In addition to the degrees and award presentations, Phillip Hord, senior class president, will present the senior class gift to White. Dr. Paul Dixon, chancellor, will conclude the commencement program with the benediction.

Located in southwest Ohio, Cedarville University is an accredited, Christ-centered, Baptist institution with an enrollment of 3,620 undergraduate, graduate, and online students in more than 100 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.