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CONTACT: Mark D. Weinstein
Executive Director of Public Relations
937-766-8800 (o)
937-532-6885 (m)
Mweinstein@cedarville.edu
@cedarvillenews

Media Seek Professors for Expertise

CEDARVILLE, OHIO – When big stories hit the airwaves, statewide media are calling upon Cedarville University professors to interject their expertise so Ohio residents better understand the issues. And, with this happening at a regular rate, it’s a wonder how the professors from Cedarville’s history and government department teach their classes.

But they do.

During the first four months of the 2016-17 academic year, Cedarville faculty, staff—and some students—participated in 399 media interviews — an increase of 105 interviews from the same time one year earlier. And, the faculty from the history and government department handled 59 percent of the media work.

This upward trend of media interviews is expected from a stable of faculty known for staying current on world events, including politics, terrorism and international affairs, and the growing turbulence between communities and police.

Of course, it didn’t hurt to have a presidential election take place that fuels extra opportunities through a party convention in Cleveland. Dr. Mark Caleb Smith, professor of political science and director of the Center for Political Studies, has captured the interest of media throughout the Midwest because of his straight-forward approach to commenting on the news.

He’s become a regular contributor for all Dayton media outlets, as well as with media in Chicago, Cleveland, Columbus and Toledo, as the country navigated through a stormy presidential campaign — and election. The opportunities are expected to continue through the inauguration of Donald Trump in January 2017 for Smith, who has already participated in 179 interviews (He finished the 2015-16 year with 172 interviews).

Smith’s colleagues have followed in his footsteps, although not at the same intensity. With the growing number of police shooting or being shot by disgruntled citizens, or finding themselves in difficult situations with residents, former Cleveland Chief of Police Dr. Patrick Oliver has regularly provided insight into ways of improving police-community relations. Oliver, now the director of the criminal justice program and associate professor of criminal justice, has become the go-to expert in southwest and central Ohio on related topics.

He’s conducted 40 interviews during the current academic year, which surpasses his 2015-16 total by 60 percent. Colleague Dr. Glen Duerr, assistant professor of international studies, has rapidly become a leading voice on international relations and is on pace to equal his 71 interviews from the previous academic year. Duerr, a citizen of the United Kingdom, Canada and the United States brings a unique voice to the conversation on international and domestic terrorism, as well as international politics.

Clearly, it’s important to provide expert commentary on current events for these faculty members. Serving as media subject matter experts keeps them sharp and engaged. But it also helps them become better professors, and the media exposure serves as a key recruiting tool for Cedarville University as prospective students can follow their future faculty members while still in high school.
“Having faculty engaged with media is a win-win situation for media outlets, residents who benefit from the interviews, but also for Cedarville University,” said Mark D. Weinstein, executive director of public relations. “These media interviews not only help expand our brand as a top-tier Christian university, but they also say to a prospective student that they will be educated by faculty members who know their profession very well. If I were a student looking at a college, I’d want to sit under faculty who are engaged in this manner.”

The Cedarville faculty also enjoy the challenges that come with spur of the moment media requests.

Located in southwest Ohio, Cedarville University is an accredited, Christ-centered, Baptist institution with an enrollment of 3,760 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. For more information about the University, visit www.cedarville.edu.