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Avid poker player co-founder of BioWare named the Allard Chair

Edmonton – Dr. Ray Muzyka, founder and CEO of Threshold Impact, has been named the 2017 Allard Chair in Business. Muzyka first inspired MacEwan business students in 2016 when he spoke as part of the university’s NextUp speakers series. During that lecture, he discussed his journey which led from a career in medicine, to becoming a video game developer and, eventually, a social entrepreneur.

“Ray is a local, successful entrepreneur whose accomplishments and creativity are an inspiration to our students. His perseverance and risk-taking abilities are exactly what our students need to understand,” said Elsie Elford, dean, School of Business. “Throughout the year he will be speaking to business students and mentoring student club executives.”

Video games were initially a hobby for Muzyka and fellow medical doctor Greg Zeschuk. As medical students they developed medical simulation programs along with colleague Dr. Aug Yip. “The three of us liked business and developing software, but medical simulation programming at the time was a very tough market,” said Muzyka.

Over lunch one day, Muzyka and Zeschuk decided to take a chance. “We all knew great programmers, artists and designers, and we were passionate and knowledgeable about video games. So we decided to take everything we’d saved up as medical doctors, and form a video game company,” added Muzyka. Along with Yip, they created BioWare, which focused on developing high-quality console, PC and online role-playing games. The company achieved international success almost immediately; the second game they developed was the enormously successful Baldur’s Gate, which sold more than two million copies.

When he first changed careers, everyone thought Muzyka was crazy; the idea of going from a very stable, respected, high-income profession as a physician to an unknown future as an entrepreneur in entertainment technology was definitely unusual. But taking a risk is nothing usual for Muzyka, he’s also an avid poker player.

“Poker is a microcosm of business for me – it has statistics, social interaction, reading people, probabilities, risk mitigation and game theory,” said Muzyka. “In negotiations, for example, it’s helpful to understand the shades of truth in the way people answer.” Now in his third career chapter, he mentors and invests in technology, new media, medical innovations and social enterprise as an angel investor via Threshold Impact.

Established in 1985 by MacEwan University, in partnership with the Allard Foundation, the Chair in Business is an honourary teaching position that recognizes a distinguished business and community leader. The 2017 Dr. Charles Allard reception will be held on Tuesday, March 7.

Founded in 1971, MacEwan University inspires its students with a powerful combination of academic excellence and personal learning experiences. Offering more than 65 programs including undergraduate degrees, applied degrees, diplomas, certificates, continuing education and corporate training, the university provides a transformative education in a creative, collaborative and supportive learning environment where creativity and innovation thrive. Located in Edmonton, Alberta Canada, MacEwan University offers a unique student experience that opens up diverse pathways for achievement and growth.

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