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Swan song as long time music program chair announces retirement from MacEwan University

Edmonton – Bob Gilligan, MacEwan University music program chair, will be moving on from the halls of the Centre for the Arts and Communications after 35 years of service. Gilligan, a Manitoba native, has been with the music program from the beginning. “I was part of a very successful Winnipeg band in my early twenties, when I heard about this new program in Edmonton,” he recalls. “I jumped at the chance, because at the time there was really nowhere to go to continue my education.” Graduating in 1976 with his music diploma, Gilligan was immediately hired as an instructor. “I kind of got thrust into this expanding program that was increasing in size and becoming more popular year after year. It was filling a hole that didn’t exist," he says.

Gilligan, who also holds a BEd (Alberta) and MEd (Victoria), has achieved many milestones over the past three decades as program chair. “I’ve seen this program go from something that not many people have heard about to one that has earned provincial, national and international recognition," Gilligan says. He also points to having a part in arranging multiple articulation agreements with other post-secondary institutions for the Music diploma program, including the University of Toronto and the Liverpool Institute of Performing Arts. “We’ve developed many alternatives for our students who are now able to complete their degree in western Canada, or select our diploma program and transfer if they wish to travel further abroad. Our own Bachelor of Music in Jazz and Contemporary Popular Music program makes us a strong viable choice for students,” Gilligan says.

“We’ve always been unique in that we’ve always embraced all styles of contemporary popular music. Some institutions that have traditionally only offered jazz and/or classical training, are only now starting to look at other styles,” he says. According to Gilligan, the focus has always been on the students developing themselves and their careers. “The magic moments are the ones that come from students saying we’ve made a difference in their lives. It’s one of the things that make this an ideal job – something to be really proud of," he adds. "I work with some of the greatest musicians in Canada. We (faculty) are a big musical family and are all here because we believe in the program and the students."

Gilligan’s post won’t be empty for long, however. In September, 2012 MacEwan University’s music program will sing a new tune as they welcome incoming chair, and current composition head, Allan Gilliland.

*Founded in 1971, MacEwan University is proudly celebrating its 40th anniversary. As a comprehensive university, MacEwan University offers more than 65 programs including undergraduate degrees, applied degrees, diplomas, certificates, continuing education and corporate training. Its philosophy of inspiring minds, providing career opportunities and opening the doors to academic excellence, continues to be its guide as it serves the educational needs of students across Alberta, Canada and the world.*

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