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Irfan Chaudhry to lead Office of Human Rights

Edmonton – Michelle Plouffe, MacEwan University’s general counsel and vice-president, governance, is pleased to announce that Irfan Chaudhry has been appointed the university’s first director of the Office of Human Rights, Diversity and Equity.

Plouffe realized the university was missing a key resource for students facing discrimination and spent over a year researching what human rights departments look like at other Canadian universities. At the same time, she hosted workshops for students, faculty and staff to determine the MacEwan community’s vision for such a department. “What I want is to put our thoughts into action, and we’ve found an amazing person to do that,” says Plouffe. “Irfan is gentle, he has the right approach and a lot of experience.”

Chaudhry has taught sociology and criminology at MacEwan for the past eight years. Beyond his teaching responsibilities he has worked on human rights policies for the City of Edmonton and the Edmonton Police Service, while also sitting on the Alberta Hate Crimes Committee.

“When I was first offered the position, the first thing I said was ‘thank you for trusting me with this huge honour,’” said Chaudhry. “People are experiencing discrimination, hate, violence and injustice because of who they are and that’s not acceptable,” he says. “I want students to understand this isn’t happening in another country or another province—it’s happening here—so let’s collectively work to address it.”

Chaudhry says the work of the Office of Human Rights, Diversity and Equity involves listening to students, celebrating diversity and, ultimately, building a MacEwan with students, faculty and staff who are human rights champions both within and outside our academic halls. “We need to make sure the entire university feels encouraged and empowered to help build a culture of human rights equity and inclusion,” he says. “It’s not just the work of one person, or one office.”

“Universities are there to challenge misconceptions, raise awareness and make us feel uncomfortable,” said Chaudhry. “You’re not going to get everyone to agree on everything, but we’re called to come together on common ground for the greater good. That’s where we can focus our energy.”

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.