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Melvin Excited to Lead EIU Music Dept. as Doudna Project Moves Forward

Feb-25-2005

As the new head of the music department at Eastern Illinois University, W. Parker Melvin looks forward to helping orchestrate the beginning stages of the new Doudna Fine Arts Center.

Melvin, chosen to serve this semester as acting chairman after the resignation of Roger Stoner, has been a member of the EIU faculty since 1991, so he's been on campus since the Doudna project was just a gleam in Stoner's eye.

This semester, after years of waiting and hoping, officials have accepted bids for construction, bringing the long-sought-after building one step closer to reality. Work is scheduled to begin in March. It's a welcome step for the art, music and theater departments, which will be housed in the building.

"To know that the project is moving forward at this stage is very exciting, because this facility is going to be an absolute state-of-the-art showcase for fine arts on this campus, in this community and in the entire state," Melvin said. "(I hope) to see through the excellent groundwork that my predecessor laid in preparation for the beginning of the Doudna project, and to the best of my abilities do everything that I'm called upon to do toward that goal."

The trumpet professor would also like to help the music department blow its own horn.

"One of my major initiatives is to increase the scope and quality of our visibility in the state," Melvin said, "and as part of that, to help the faculty achieve their goals for the recruitment and retention of more students and more top-quality students."

A revamped Web site is in the works, and Melvin plans to work with faculty "on a recruitment plan that will outline what efforts we need to make."

One effort that Melvin anticipates will pay great dividends in recruitment is a summer-only graduate program in music education, geared toward music teachers seeking a convenient time to take classes.

"Such a program has great possibilities in terms of the number of people it could attract," he said.

Melvin's term as acting chairman ends June 30, and he said that if he is offered the opportunity to take the role on a permanent basis, he would "very seriously consider" it.

"This is an institution that I'm very proud to be associated with in any capacity," Melvin said. "It's just such a great atmosphere for teaching and learning."

Melvin's wife, Michele, teaches full-time in EIU's Counseling and Student Development Program. She is also co-owner and co-founder of Hunter & Melvin Professional Counseling in Charleston. The Melvins have two young daughters, Tessa and Elinor.

"We both absolutely love the people that we get to work with on this campus, including students, faculty, staff and administration," Melvin said. "My wife and I are very committed to remaining in the Charleston community."