

Faculty Award for Teaching Excellence

Gary Locke

If the RCC Marching Tigers are called Hollywood's Band, then their director, Gary Locke, is a candidate for Mr. Hollywood—at least in musical circles.

Twenty-five years ago, it wasn't clear that the script was going to be a blockbuster. Locke could easily count the number of college kids who showed up for the first Marching Tigers' practice. Having just been recruited from a successful program at North High School, Locke spent that evening wondering if he had made the right choice. But he had made a commitment, and he was determined to honor it.



For Locke and the Marching Tigers, "Blood, Sweat, and Tears" wasn't just the name of a rock band. It was how they survived. At the end of the first year, the Marching Tigers had a foothold. In the years that followed, they would take RCC, then Riverside, and then the nation and world by storm, racking up multiple championships, performing at every Disney theme park in the world, strutting down every major parade route, and appearing in countless TV commercials, television shows, and movies.

Locke will tell you the Marching Tigers' success is a family affair. And it is. From wife and partner Sheila, to son Paul who shares conducting duties, to father William who keeps the instruments and equipment in playing form. All surrounded by generations of student-musicians, who Locke refers to as "the kids."

As an associate professor of Music at RCC, Locke places severe demands on his students, but he also teaches them serious skills. What they learn in practice and through performances establishes core values that will carry them through life, regardless of career choice. For Locke, success in any key sounds sweet.