
DONOR PROFILE:
EIRIK AND BRENDA COOPER



Photo by Mike Ciesielski.

The Mighty Sound of Maryland Marching Band is renowned for giving UM students a college experience like no other — performing at every home football game, traveling to at least one away game per year and creating the loudest and most dedicated Terrapin cheering section anywhere. Perhaps more importantly, it is an experience that forges lifelong bonds of friendship, and even leads to marriage.

That was certainly the case for Eirik and Brenda Cooper, who met in the saxophone section of the band in 1991 and were married at the University of Maryland Chapel just yards from where they first met, surrounded by many fellow Terps including the best man, two bridesmaids and of course the musicians.

“Dr. Sparks likes to say, ‘Look around, you may be looking at your future husband or wife.’ We found that sentiment ridiculous at the time, but it turns out to be a fairly common occurrence,” Eirik observes.

Eirik was “born a Terp” — his parents were both attending the University of Maryland when he was born — and had many interactions with the UM School of Music growing up. Brenda recalls growing up as an Army brat, moving around quite a bit then settling down in Gaithersburg during high school before enrolling at the university. The intense sense of connection they developed to Maryland as students inspired them to become donors to the School of Music Scholarship fund and in 2008, they established the Eirik and Brenda Cooper Scholarship, an endowed fund which provides merit-based scholarships to students majoring in wind, brass or percussion instruments in the School of Music.

“The recent economic issues underscore the importance of scholarship opportunities for future performing arts students; with the facilities at the Clarice Smith Performing Arts

Center and the opportunities available for musicians and artists within the university — as well as in the Washington, DC Metropolitan area — future students would be hard-pressed to find a better institution to hone their abilities. If we can do anything to facilitate that, it is our honor,” Eirik says.

“The University and the School of Music have given us some of the best experiences of our lives and we feel privileged to help other talented young men and women have the opportunity to make wonderful experiences of their own. We met many of our closest friends at the university; most of them shared our connection to the band.”

While students, Eirik and Brenda traveled to cheer the Terps at many away games and at ACC and NCAA tournaments. Eirik performed at close to

a dozen commencement ceremonies and witnessed memorable speakers including Jehan Sadat, Bill Cosby, Hillary Clinton and even Elmo. He performed at the groundbreaking ceremony for the Center and says that he and Brenda find that the Center far surpasses all expectations they had at the groundbreaking.

And even though their years as students are over, the University still provides them with amazing experiences. Eirik accompanied the Mighty Sound of Maryland to New Orleans to help build homes at the *Musicians’ Village* after Hurricanes Katrina and Rita and they both traveled with members of the University of Maryland Community Band to China this past summer — all continuing opportunities to learn, explore and grow.

“Our gift is simultaneously an investment in the University, the arts, talented young musicians and the School of Music itself,” Eirik says. “I think it would be difficult to find a way that a contribution can do so much elsewhere.” ■

ON THE UM SCHOOL OF MUSIC:
“The University and the School of Music have given us some of the best experiences of our lives...”

To discuss how you can support performing arts scholarships, contact Edward Lewis, Associate Director of Development, at 301.405.8178 or via email at edlewis@umd.edu.