UAlbany Weekend MBA Stories – Flaiyh Alanazi, Ph.D., MBA
Senior Manager of Ethoxylates, Ethanolamines, and Oleochemicals at SABIC Technology & Innovation

Hailing from Saudi Arabia, Dr. Flaiyh Alanazi has worked for SABIC since 1998 when he graduated from King Saud University with a Bachelor of Science degree in Chemistry. SABIC, the Saudi Basic Industries Corporation, is one of the world’s leading manufacturers of chemicals, fertilizers, plastics, and metals.

“I have always been proud to be a SABIC employee,” shares Dr. Alanazi. “The state of the art business leadership at SABIC is always striving for excellence as a global company, keeping employees up to date with technology and business.”

After working as a SABIC chemist for three years, Dr. Alanazi received full scholarship to pursue his Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.), Physical Chemistry (Catalysis) from Cardiff University, a public research university located in Cardiff, Wales, United Kingdom.

“From there, I worked as a SABIC lead scientist in Saudi Arabia until being given a two-year assignment as lead scientist in Selkirk, New York,” explains Dr. Alanazi.

Even with his doctorate, pursuit of a business education was of utmost importance because Dr. Alanazi wanted to educate himself in business in a very systematic way. “I knew my specialty very well, however, I always keep abreast of science and technology development,” he says. “I wanted to better understand business as a whole so I could further contribute to generating revenue for my company.”

Even before departing Saudi Arabia for the States, Dr. Alanazi knew he would join an MBA program. “I began my search online before departing Saudi Arabia,” he says. “My company always encourages the development and education of its employees and I had full encouragement from my management.”

Understanding he would be in the United States for two years, Dr. Alanazi recognized the golden opportunity to pursue his MBA in order to educate himself on the broad spectrum of business, particularly at the global level. “This is why I chose the Weekend MBA Program at the University at Albany,” says Dr. Alanazi.
Only days after arriving in New York, his first time in the States, Dr. Alanazi reached out to UAlbany’s Weekend MBA Program Director Don Purdy shortly before the current program was to commence. “I knew I was only in the U.S. for two years and couldn’t miss a moment if I wanted to complete the program during my stay,” expounds Dr. Alanazi. “I asked with anticipation, ‘Do I have a chance to join your program?’” After interviewing and completing all the necessary documentation, notarization, and commendation letters, he was glad to be accepted and began classes just two weeks later.

Dr. Alanazi credits the cohort structure of the UAlbany Weekend MBA Program for enriching the learning experience. With almost 30 professionals in his cohort, he describes his time in the program as a “really good experience” because of the cohort’s diversity which included general managers, government employees, engineers, a librarian, a healthcare vice president, marketing professionals, electricians, and at least one chemist.

“The diversity added greatly to my experience because everyone shared their strengths and the way they tackled issues within their own organizations,” Dr. Alanazi describes. “For example, we would discuss a business perspective and then hear how each professional would handle it based on their own experience. All of that added to the vast knowledge I gained and have been able to implement in my role at SABIC.”

Perhaps what appealed most to Dr. Alanazi was learning how other professionals overcame obstacles and found success. He continues, “It wasn’t simply positive shares about why something was a good experience for classmates and professors. It was their methodology that gave insight into the business side of things, adding greatly to my knowledge base. My experience at UAlbany allowed me to live the experience and provided me with a systematic approach to the entire chain of business including human resources, leadership, finance, project management, sales, market research, personal development, and presentation skills.”

For Dr. Alanazi, part of living the experience was the challenge of relocating his wife and children to a foreign nation. “When I came to the United States, my wife, two sons and two daughters were with me,” he informs. “In addition to starting a new work assignment and the Weekend MBA Program, I needed to look for elementary schools for the children. They learned English in the U.S. and on the first day, my eldest son exclaimed, ‘Dad, I cannot communicate with anybody!’ Just one or two months later, he could! Fortunately, children are fast learners. I’m grateful we were able to maximize the benefits of our stay in the U.S. for my personal life and family as well as my professional life and education.”

The key to his success was having support from his wife, caring for the children, and support from his employer, giving him the green light to join the UAlbany Weekend MBA Program. “The cohort structure of the MBA program and how it’s designed gave me room to successfully spend time with my studies, thrive in my job, and share time with my family,” tells Dr. Alanazi. “This balance is why I was able to manage it and how I was able to achieve my MBA in May 2013, just one month before the end of my SABIC assignment in the United States.”
Upon return home to Saudi Arabia, Dr. Alanazi was promoted by SABIC to Senior Manager of their Technology & Innovation Division. He says, “In my new role, I deal a lot more with individual and team development. My management skills are a direct result of the knowledge I gained from the MBA program including, understanding employees’ strengths and weaknesses, minimizing costs, developing and expediting projects, and the manner in which I coach my team.”

“I believe each one of us participates in shaping our own future,” he divulges. “The knowledge and experience one can gain from the UAlbany Weekend Program will be seen in their future. For me, this global assignment greatly shaped my personality, my knowledge, my experience, and my way of looking at the world. My objective is always to make myself ready to grow toward my potential.”

“My philosophy is this: DO IT RIGHT. Be Passionate and it will show up in the future.” – Dr. Flaiyh Alanazi

Connect with Dr. Flaiyh Alanazi here:

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