UAlbany Weekend MBA Stories – Gautam Chatterji
Senior Team Leader, Controls Engineering for Combined Cycle Power Plants at GE Power & Water

The famous fictional American metropolis, Gotham City, is best known as home to Batman. Although he doesn’t don a bat-themed costume and fight crime, Gautam Chatterji dons a smile as he explains how to pronounce his first name, “The closest word is, “Gotham” – like where Batman lives – but without the H.”

Born in India, Gautam Chatterji arrived in the United States in 1998, first generation, bringing with him an established, long-term vision for his career and education path. “Whatever I do, I dig in,” he says with conviction. “I want to connect the dots and leverage all I’ve learned in the past. My strategy is to learn the basics so I may draw on those trends at any time.”

Early on, Gautam knew where he wanted to go and purposefully set a course to get there. When he was eight years old, he began telling his Dad he wanted to go to boarding school to cultivate overall development. “I recognized that boarding school would allow me much more than education,” he shares. “Discipline comes in very early because you have to manage your own self. It also helps you appreciate the value of money because allowances are limited.”

With the unwavering support of his parents, Gautam left home for boarding school at age 12. “My parents instilled in me that hard work is critical and there’s no substitution,” he accounts. “My father started as a bank clerk and worked hard all his life, always leading by example.” Even though Gautam has been physically apart from his family most of life, they are very close. “True and full appreciation often comes after you move away.”

Gautam’s bride of 16 years, Beena, grew up in similar fashion, leaving home at age 17 to pursue an engineering degree. “That’s when we met,” he reveals with warmth. “We were college sweethearts in India during undergrad.”

Before departing his home country, Gautam studied the ins and outs of engineering in two major processes industries, Food & Pharmaceutical and Tea & Tobacco. As a project engineer in the fats and oils division of Alfa Laval India Limited in Pune, India, Gautam engineered and commissioned seven edible oil refineries at different locations in India. Then, as a project manager with Godfrey Phillips India Limited in Mumbai, India (with major stakeholders including Philip Morris, USA), Gautam was responsible for carrying out production and utility services-based engineering projects from conceptualization to execution and commissioning.

Always up for a challenge, Gautam Chatterji deliberately came to the United States 15 years ago with the goal of earning his masters in engineering. In December 2000, he received his masters in Industrial & Manufacturing Engineering with a major in Industrial Automation from Cleveland State University in Ohio. Soon after, he moved to Albany, New York to join Innovative Control Systems Inc. as a controls engineer automating turbo-machinery.
in power generation and oil and gas applications. With the study of two industries under his belt, it was time for Gautam to add a third major industry to his tool kit, Energy.

In 2006, he went to work for General Electric (GE), joining the world-renowned, elite family of life-changing innovators. “Being an engineer, my intention has always been to first master what I do best and then build on the business side,” he says. Upon completion of the University at Albany Weekend MBA Program in June 2013, Gautam will have the opportunity to advance into new roles at GE. “...bringing with me a full appreciation of the ‘nitty gritty’ because I’ve walked the walk.”

When Gautam decided to pursue an MBA with a GE sponsorship, the Weekend MBA Program at UAlbany quickly became his top choice. “I prefer classroom learning over online learning,” he offers. “The cohort structure at UAlbany provides a wealth of learning that could not otherwise be achieved. There’s simply no comparison to the team building and sense of belonging.”

The desire for well-rounded learning that spurred Gautam to attend boarding school at the age of 12 still burns strongly today. “My approach to education is to continually learn in a broad spectrum. I have never sought back-to-back degrees because I believe degree earning should be interspersed with life learning.” True to form, he’s planned his career and life accordingly.

“The Weekend MBA Program at UAlbany is a marriage between experience and education,” Gautam suggests. “This program provides me with exposure to the varied experiences of those in my cohort plus alums, providing the value of a non-threatening forum to discuss new plans and ideas that will endure long past commencement.”

Gautam Chatterji’s next goal is to mentor his children, daughter Meghna (10 years) and son Tushar (almost 5) to set and seek after their own ambitions. So, when Meghna approached him and Beena about traveling by herself to India to spend the summer with cousins, they encouraged her. “She came back bubbling with self-confidence,” says the proud father. “My daughter has no fear! She takes after her mother.”

Adopting a long-term approach to life has served the Chatterji family well. “Short-term, quick gains are important, but you must have a plan and vision for the future,” conveys Gautam. “Decide where you’re going. That will provide direction and help drive day-to-day decisions as well.”

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