



Ashish Diwanji
Vice President of
Innovation,
Owens Corning
Composite Solutions



Congratulations *Dr. Ashish Diwanji*

UDaily Story:

Owens Corning VP Wins Alumni Award, Shares Career Advice

8:30 a.m., April 28, 2011—Many inspirational speakers advise others to follow their passion in determining a career path, but Ashish Diwanji believes that's not enough.

“Following your passion is good,” he told an audience at the University of Delaware Center for Composite Materials on April 12, “but you have to match your passion with your skills. Pursue the things you love, but make sure you’re good at them.”

Diwanji obviously knows what he’s talking about. Recipient of the 2011 CCM Distinguished Alumni Award, he has melded his leadership and entrepreneurship skills with his love of advanced composites over the past two decades, emerging as vice president of innovation in Owens Corning’s composites solutions business.

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In introducing Diwanji during the award ceremony, engineering dean Michael Chajes referred to him as an example of UD's "Talent Magnet" pillar.

"You're an entrepreneur and a great example of what we're trying to promote among our students," Chajes said.

Diwanji shared advice and anecdotes from his 21-year career with more than 100 students, faculty, and staff at the ceremony.

After earning his Ph.D. in materials science at UD in 1990, Diwanji joined Lord Corporation, where he spent the next five years learning about the fundamentals of buying and selling.

In 1995, he joined Owens Corning, the company known for its pink insulation. Diwanji said that OC's discovery of fiberglass was actually a mistake, but that proved to be a lesson in innovation for him.

He went on to work in various facets of the composites business, including engineering, product development, and management. He couldn't make the jump to leadership, however, until he was willing to give up the need to do everything himself and lead others in doing. "That's the difference between a manager and a leader," he said.

Diwanji finished his talk by highlighting his rules for success: be credible and trustworthy, be decisive, always leave an impact, and be balanced. "Grow talent by challenging people and encouraging them to explore new competencies," he said.

In selecting Diwanji for the award, CCM recognized not only his professional accomplishments but also his successful mentoring of the next generation of composites engineers.

Pictured are, from left, Jack Gillespie, director of the Center for Composite Materials; Ashish Diwanji of Owens Corning; UD President Patrick Harker; and David Weir, director of the Office of Economic Innovation and Partnerships.



Diwanji was the brains behind **OC's 2010 Composite App Challenge**, a global competition to find new applications for composite materials. Two CCM-affiliated doctoral students, Cedric Jacob and John Gangloff, won a **\$10,000 cash prize in the challenge** for their concept of an integrated structural composite fuel cell.



Owens Corning's Ashish Diwanji and grad students John Gangloff and Cedric Jacob answer questions from the audience as center director Jack Gillespie looks on.



The pair shared their experience with the audience at the end of the award ceremony. Both have a firm grasp on the need for multi-functionality in new products and of the suitability of composites for making that happen. They also understand the process of bringing an idea from the lab to the marketplace.

"We can't come out with a new product in 10 years unless we're doing the fundamental work now," Jacob said.

Gangloff added, "What we've learned from CCM is that it's all about engagement and learning from others."

"Listening to John and Cedric, you can certainly see the tremendous impact that Ashish and Owens Corning have had on CCM," said center director Jack Gillespie.

Article by Diane Kukich

Photos by Dawn Fiore

Celebrating 35 years of significant contributions to composites science and technology, the education of students, and the creation and transfer of technology to industry.

This is a newsletter publication of the University of Delaware Center for Composite Materials
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