

KGI LEADERSHIP PROFILES:

Janelle (Grimes) Fluharty, MBS '06
and Ravneesh Sachdev, MBS '06

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It takes only a brief conversation with Janelle Fluharty and Ravneesh Sachdev to understand why they’ve attained leadership positions in the biotech industry. Both have worked exceptionally hard, have acquired the best education, and clearly grasp that everything they do involves and impacts people. “I work with people in functions all across the company, including legal, medical, commercial and other stakeholders,” says Fluharty, who, as director of regulatory affairs for Amgen works with colleagues throughout the company to ensure all product communications are compliant with FDA regulations. “My team must interpret the regulations and then communicate them clearly and concisely to a variety of people at different levels of understanding. It’s our job to do that in a way that is meaningful to them.”

In a similar fashion, Sachdev, a senior director of global business development at UCB Pharma based in London, engages with a variety of functional experts within and outside business development to successfully evaluate, negotiate and close business deals. “Once you’ve found a potential asset to license or acquire, you collaborate with R&D on robust ways to develop it. You partner with finance to determine the relevant development costs, and you discuss with manufacturing about how you’re going to make the asset once you bring it in-house,” Sachdev says. “Finally, you team up with legal to ensure the final contract is accurate and comprehensive. Overall, it’s my responsibility to integrate all these critical opinions to make sure that we close the best deal possible for both parties involved.”

After graduating with a bachelor’s degree in molecular neuroscience from Claremont McKenna College, Sachdev’s first professional work experience was at Ionian Technologies, a small KGI biotech spin-off. Although his primary responsibilities were in scientific research, the small company culture enabled him to productively contribute to investor relations, marketing, operations and other business functions. When the startup moved to San Diego, Sachdev opted to return to academia rather than relocate. He spent a year doing genomics research at Loma Linda University Medical Center, and then decided to enroll in graduate school.



RAVNEESH SACHDEV, MBS '06

“I missed working on the business side of the industry and realized that I wanted a career that combined science and business in a meaningful way,” he says. “KGI was the best choice for me for two key reasons: the MBS degree was innovative and the first of its kind and KGI’s network of connections within the life sciences industry was extensive.”

A career in regulatory affairs wasn’t even on Fluharty’s radar as an undergrad studying biology at Westminster College in New Wilmington, Pennsylvania. Instead, after graduation she began working in clinical research at the Henry M. Jackson Foundation and later at West Virginia University. Five years into her career, she realized she needed an advanced degree if she wanted to progress. KGI’s MBS program intrigued her. “The more I looked into KGI’s program, the more it opened my eyes to career opportunities in industry where I could apply my science background,” she says. “It also has this wonderful faculty who bring industry experience with them.”

A KGI pharmaceutical development class taught by Karen Moynihan ignited Fluharty’s interest in regulatory affairs, and it was Moynihan who put her on the path toward her current career. Both Fluharty and Sachdev also credit their Team Master’s Projects (TMPs) with helping them build skills they still apply today. Working on a TMP for Amylin Pharmaceuticals not only bolstered Fluharty’s knowledge of regulatory affairs but also furthered her understanding of how her work interacted with the cross-functional roles of her team members.

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That same people interaction still motivates Fluharty in her work at Amgen, as does the impact she and her team have on the lives of others. “What we work on every day affects patients. It can help them understand their medications better, help with their discussions with their doctors and help in a variety of other ways. That opportunity to see such a discrete and poignant impact is very motivating.”

Sachdev’s role as the team leader on his TMP for Beckman Coulter allowed him to experience what it was like to analyze, synthesize and present a well-thought-out recommendation on whether the company should commercialize a particular asset. It also provided him the opportunity to lead a diverse team of his fellow students. Today at UCB, Sachdev still leverages the skills he acquired during his TMP: the ability to do a robust analysis, to both collaborate and lead effectively, and to make an impactful presentation.

As for his success, he points to two key things: “Attending KGI changed the course of my career. I learned to be aware of my strengths and weaknesses and became adept at recognizing and creating opportunities for professional advancement. Consequently, I grew both as a person and as a professional in the life sciences industry. The other is the unwavering support of my wife, Asavari. Without those two things, I truly don’t believe I would have made it as far as I have.”



**JANELLE FLUHARTY, MBS '06,
WITH HER DAUGHTER
AISLYN FLUHARTY**