



SMU Lyle Alumni Jim and Abha Divine Pay it Forward

The Divines (both '89) first met as electrical engineering undergraduates at SMU, and credit the well-rounded education they received, along with scholarships and co-op opportunities, with launching their successful careers.

Jim is CEO of Keterex, Inc., a mixed-signal integrated circuits and systems developer. After SMU, Abha went on to earn an M.S. in Electrical Engineering from MIT, then held prominent positions at SBC Communications, Inc. and later launched and led AT&T Knowledge Ventures, a global intellectual property business. Today, she is the founder and managing director of Techquity Capital Management, a private equity firm based in Austin devoted to unlocking value from innovation through investments in intellectual property. She serves on the Lyle Executive Board, chairing the Entrepreneurship Committee, and interviews prospective students for SMU's President's Scholar program. Throughout the years, the Divines have continuously supported Lyle and the University, focusing primarily on scholarships.

In talking with the Divines about their undergraduate experience and time at SMU, we begin to understand what drives their passion to continue investing both their time and resources in the University.

HOW DID SMU PREPARE YOU FOR YOUR FUTURE CAREER?

ABHA: SMU and the engineering school set a strong foundation for my future studies and career path. I was able to structure my own curriculum and undertake research at the undergraduate level, which prepared me for graduate school at MIT. I graduated with a double-major in Electrical Engineering and Applied Math and had the opportunity to complete the Honors Program in Liberal Arts. This holistic experience cemented the interdisciplinary way that I look at problems and honed my communication and analysis skills. Writing and studying about how institutions, artistic trends, and philosophy intersect to define and create a culture was a point of view I carried forward to my engineering research and future roles in R&D, strategic planning and marketing in the corporate world.

JIM: SMU's liberal arts background, combined with an engineering specialty, provides a base set of knowledge that can be applied to a wide range of careers or graduate programs. That foundation, along with co-op opportunities with Dallas-area companies, enabled me to focus my career choices. Graduating with a year of work experience that directly applied to my first job gave me a valuable head start compared to my peers at the time. Lessons learned both in the classroom and those early internships have helped throughout my career.

WHAT MOTIVATES YOU TO GIVE BACK TO LYLE?

ABHA: Since my parents both did their graduate work at SMU in engineering and we lived on campus, I have a long history with the engineering school. I can remember going to the labs as they were working on their research when I was a young child. Later, as an undergraduate student, the University afforded me so many opportunities to grow as a leader, an engineer and as a person. As a recipient of the President's Scholarship, I want to acknowledge the investment that SMU made in me and the potential that the school nurtured and developed while I was there.

JIM: I attended SMU on a scholarship from the engineering school, supplemented by earnings from my co-ops and internships. Those opportunities enabled me to attend SMU when I otherwise wouldn't have been able to afford it. I personally feel an obligation to help provide the same type of opportunity to attract talented students to SMU.

WHERE WOULD YOU LIKE TO SEE LYLE MAKING A DIFFERENCE TO STUDENTS AND RESEARCHERS IN THE FUTURE?

ABHA: A lot has changed since our SMU days; there are state-of-the-art lab spaces and equipment, room for independent investigation and tinkering, and an expanded research faculty and programs. However, some things haven't changed that are just as important: the chance to work with and get to know faculty across many classes and projects, a strong hands-on curriculum, and support for multidisciplinary education. We'd like to see that work continue and expand. Having a robust research environment will enhance student experience, draw strong faculty to the school, and allow for stronger ties with industry. SMU has a long history in communications and semiconductor technologies, areas where both Jim and I spent our careers. We'd love to see this history continue.

JIM: I hope Lyle continues its work to change the way people think about engineers and engineering. In particular, the Caruth Institute for Engineering Education encourages more students to study engineering and the Hart Center for Engineering Leadership develops students' leadership skills, enabling a generation of engineers equipped to make a lasting impact on our world.