



Siddharth 'Bobby' Mehta, '81

Bobby Mehta Helps Kilts Go Further Faster

The Gift That Keeps Giving

When Siddharth 'Bobby' Mehta, '81, and his wife, Swati Mehta, had their first philanthropic discussion as a young married couple, they established a rule which they have followed to this day.

"We decided very early on that we wanted to support organizations where we were willing to spend time—that's the only way we like to do things, by being involved," Bobby said. "There are people who can write bigger checks than we can. But we want to give to causes we feel passionately about."

For Bobby, Chicago Booth met this criteria. Born in India, Bobby received his undergraduate degree from the London School of Economics. His father then felt it was important for him to come to America for his graduate education and additional opportunities. His advisor suggested Booth, then called the Graduate School of Business.

"When I began looking at schools, I liked the mix between the theoretical and the applied, which the University of Chicago offered," he said. "I had a wonderful experience here, very, very fond memories. I was 21 years old, lived in the International House and made great friends, many of whom I'm in still in touch with to this day. It was my introduction to America."

Over the years, the university has been a fortunate recipient of Bobby and Swati's volunteerism and generosity. The couple was active on the board of the Lab School when their son was a student. Swati also has served on the university's Women's

Board. Bobby has logged time on the India Initiative Committee and recently joined the steering committee of the Kilts Center for Marketing.

After loyally giving to Booth for many years—beginning with a \$1,000 pledge at graduation from Booth—the couple made a \$1.15 million pledge in 2016 to establish and endow the Mehta Marketing Analytics Fund at the Kilts Center. The fund will support faculty research, provide additional data storage, and elevate the profile of marketing at Booth.

"From an academic perspective, I couldn't ask for anything better than my time at Chicago Booth," Bobby said. "I was fortunate enough to have, among my professors, Fama, Miller, Scholes, Hamada, and Stigler. It was here that I learned to think, ask questions, and challenge status quo thinking, which has stood me in great stead throughout my career. For all that I gained from the school, offering my support was the right thing to do."

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As the former CEO of TransUnion, Bobby has facilitated another contribution to the school that might have an even greater impact. He convinced Jim Peck, the current CEO of TransUnion, to share their credit information with Kilts. All information is anonymized, so there's nothing personally

The Gift That Keeps Giving *continued*

identifiable, yet it can be used by the Booth faculty to research consumer borrowing behavior and their utilization of credit.

“Linking credit data with some of the other Kilts’ data can open up avenues for investigation and research,” Bobby said. “Just having the credit data alone is of great interest to people like Amir Sufi and other financial economists who are trying to research the pricing of mortgages and the extension of credit in different markets.”

The Kilts Center is very appreciative of Bobby’s involvement.

“This is a relatively new source of data, which will allow us to go farther faster; it provides better information than the shopping data used in the past,” said Art Middlebrooks, executive director of the Kilts Center. “Thanks to Bobby, TransUnion’s data will enable faculty to examine how credit was driving the Great Recession.”

“I am really fascinated by what people call big data and analytics because that was my business at TransUnion,” Bobby said. “I’ve seen first-hand the absolutely transformational impact big data has on business. In particular, I am interested in the insights derived by merging different types of data because I found that to be immensely powerful in my professional life. As someone said, data is the new oil. It lubricates so many mechanisms and processes. Without the kind of data and analytics we have today—many businesses would not exist.”

Bobby also felt that a partnership between Booth and TransUnion would be beneficial to both.

“The school has paid for data from a number of our competitors,” he said. “TransUnion is a Chicago-based company. It’s important for a Chicago company and a premier Chicago-based academic institution to collaborate. We recruit from Booth and have a number of alums among our very senior executives. We have a great affinity with the school.”

Bobby stepped down from TransUnion in 2012 and currently serves on various boards, including TransUnion, Allstate, and Avant. In addition, he spends time with early and growth-stage companies.

“It’s really fascinating for me to see what JP Dubé (Sigmund E. Edelstone Professor of Marketing and faculty director of the Kilts Center for Marketing) and his team are doing in terms of assembling datasets, sponsoring research, and juxtaposing that against the more applied background that I have,” Bobby said. “It’s the intersection of those two that I find incredibly enriching.”



Pictured here: Bobby Mehta speaks with JP Dubé.

Bobby urges fellow alumni to find their own ways to contribute to the school.

“Booth occupies a very distinct position among the top business schools of the world in that it brings together the best and most rigorous academic research with the best and most rigorous applications of that research,” he said. “I think most of us that went to Booth have found it to be extraordinarily attractive and valuable in expanding the state-of-the-art and practice of business. My experience with Kilts has shown that the faculty has a great openness and receptivity to input and ideas. When it comes to supporting the school, it’s a no-brainer. Why would you not, to whatever one’s capacity, assist Booth in carrying forth its mission?”