



## **John Cabot University**

### **ALUMNI PROFILE**



**Ali Reza Arabnia**

**BA, Business Administration, Class of 1983**

**President and CEO, Gecofin S.p.A.**

**Milan, Italy**

*Interviewed March 2009*

*What was your career path after graduating from JCU?*

I received a Master of Cost Engineering degree at Bocconi University of Milan and an MBA from the University of San Diego in California. After my studies, I began working as a simple clerk in the accounting department of Geico, an engineering and contracting company operating in the automotive industry. I later became the owner of Geico through a management-buy-out operation, and the company is now part of the Gecofin group, which operates around the world.

*What honors or awards have you received?*

I was selected by the European Government to represent Italy in a panel of fourteen managers from different European countries to be sent to Japan. Over the three-month-long mission, we visited more than thirty of the best Japanese corporations, where we examined with our Japanese counterparts the differences in how we were implementing modern managerial methodologies in European companies versus those in Japan. I've also been honored by the Constantinian University at Columbia University in

New York with a Full Professorship for Industrial Management and a Doctor of Business Administration. In addition, I've been honored as a Knight of Malta and serve on the boards of various non-profit organizations, including that of John Cabot University.

*What was John Cabot like when you attended?*

In my days, the school was called John Cabot International College, and it was situated at Via Nomentana. There were 130 students from more than 100 different countries. Every student easily spoke two or three languages, creating a truly international environment. We didn't have any class with more than 25 students, so the faculty really spent a lot of time with each of us. The professors were passionate professionals who taught quality courses. The Business Department was amazing, even when compared with higher-ranked schools I later attended for graduate programs.

*What was your favorite extra-curricular activity?*

I was President of Student Government and captain of our soccer team. We organized and participated in many events, from sport to parties, and tours to tutoring. They were all fantastic vehicles that created a truly united community.

*Was there anyone at JCU who acted as a mentor for you?*

Mr. Cavendish, the President. His style in negotiation was authentic and inspiring. Also, Mrs. Gillespie, Director of Students Affairs. Her passion, dedication, and efficiency were an example of how so much could be done with little resources.

*What advice would you give to students attending JCU today?*

Don't look for shortcuts. It may be tempting to take the absolute minimum requirements or to choose the easiest courses just so that you can pass and receive your degree, but that's not the path to success. Be intelligent for big things, not smart for small things.

*How have you given back to your alma mater?*

Through my service on JCU's Board of Trustees and work with the Alumni Association, I do what I can for our University. I really believe that all of us should contribute what we can to John Cabot, even if we can afford only a little, because our support as former students is fundamental for the school's image and future success.