



# Seeking a Socially Responsible Supply Chain

by T.D. Christensen

This distinguished professor has researched quality, equity and efficiency in distribution systems, and is

- **looking for contractual ways to motivate sustainable practices.**



If Milind Dawande gets his way, the world of supply chain management will set off a chain reaction and create a more sustainable and socially responsible marketplace.

"I'm deeply interested in socially responsible supply chain management — the social value as well as the economic value," says Dawande, the Mike Redeker Distinguished Professor in Management. "You have to think of all the stakeholders instead of just considering one objective."

Looking at multiple viewpoints comes naturally to Dawande, who started his career in computer science, detoured into math and finally found his way into business.

Growing up in Amravati, a midsize city in India, he decided to become a teacher and researcher after listening to his mother, a history professor,



talk about her rewarding academic career. But he was conflicted at first about what topic to teach.

Even as he was earning his bachelor's degree in computer science from the Birla Institute of Technology and Science in India, he found himself drawn to another area. "I was more interested in the mathematics foundations of computing, rather than coding," he says.

So he earned a master's in mathematics from the University of Louisiana and then enrolled at Carnegie Mellon University, where he received both a master's and a PhD in algorithms, combinatorics and optimization — a one-of-a-kind joint program offered by the Tepper School of Business, the Computer Science Department and the Mathematics Department.

"Before, the mathematicians and computer scientists and business guys were each doing their

Milind Dawande

Dawande with alumnus Mike Redeker, MBA'97, MS'01, namesake of his endowed post



"It becomes more and more challenging, but at the same time, it's extremely pleasing to see us grow into one of the strongest research groups in the world," he says. "Equally satisfying is the growth of our undergraduate, graduate and doctoral programs in supply chain management. Most of our doctoral graduates now are invited to join as faculty members in prominent schools worldwide."

own stuff and solving their own problems. But when they realized that their hardest problems were essentially equivalent, they said, 'Let's come together and share our techniques,'" he says.

Dawande's new way of looking at things came in handy in 1997, when he joined IBM's T.J. Watson Research Center in upstate New York. There, he helped steel companies figure out new ways to improve their manufacturing and customer service. His work included award-winning solutions that also found applications in e-commerce.

In 2000, Dawande joined the UT Dallas School of Management, and in 2012, he was appointed an Ashbel Smith Professor. This spring, he was appointed the Mike Redeker Distinguished Professor in Management (see *University Honors Seven Jindal School Professors With New Appointments*, page 10).

Along the way, Dawande has served as an associate editor in top journals (including *Manufacturing & Service Operations Management* and *Production & Operations Management*) and has published research on topics as varied as robotic cells and mobile-ad blockers.

In recent years, he has developed a special interest in socially responsible operations. His research has delved into the most efficient distribution of food grains, the fairest distribution of scarce water among farmers, and the best schemes for making sure milk farmers supply their highest-quality milk to a distributor.

In the future, he wants to research new ways to design business contracts that will incentivize companies to use sustainable practices. "There have to be checks and balances to make sure suppliers are using ethical practices and not creating environmental harm," Dawande says.

Whenever he needs a break from research and teaching, Dawande loves to watch televised cricket, a sport he played as a youth. He is also a Bollywood film fanatic who can bend your ear on the genre's finer points, like which movies are realistic and which actors are right or wrong for a role.

But these days, his spare time is in short supply. In addition to teaching and researching, he has served as coordinator for the Operations Management Area for the past 13 years, a role which includes juggling the schedules of almost 30 full-time faculty members.

Dawande's colleagues say he deserves a big share of credit for the program's growth.

"He's had significant impact on JSOM in every possible way," says Ganesh Janakiraman, an Ashbel Smith Professor of Operations Management in the Jindal School. "Milind is an excellent teacher: he's passionate, diligent, organized and patient. He is also most generous with his time and energy in furthering the research careers of doctoral students and colleagues who seek his help."

"Milind is one of the best faculty I recruited while building the OM group at JSOM," says Suresh Sethi, the Eugene McDermott Chair of Operations Management. "He is an outstanding researcher on a variety of topics, including problems affecting developing countries. He has contributed enormously to JSOM."

Dawande credits Dean Hasan Pirkul, Vice Dean Varghese Jacob and other members of the JSOM leadership team for strongly supporting operations management over the years.

"I am grateful to them for their strong commitment to continuously improving our programs and increasing the size of our programs," Dawande says.

More growth is inevitable, he says, partly because the world finally understands how important operations management and supply chain management really are.

"Years ago, our discipline wasn't as visible as, say, finance or accounting or marketing. And that was a challenge," he says. "But today, with the ease of information, students understand it. They want to become supply chain managers and solve the new problems that are arising in this dynamic world."

As a result, the Operations Management Area has become more enjoyable for teachers and students alike. "I see nothing but an upward trend for our program," he says.

Dawande receiving an OWLIE Award from JSOM Dean Hasan Pirkul

