



Sami Altaher & David DiPiero at their FGI office in New York



LEBOW COLLEGE OF BUSINESS

# PROFILE

## SAMI ALTAHER & DAVID DIPIERO— TWO LEBOW ALUMNI SUCCEED IN INTERNATIONAL FINANCE

By Erin Meanley

Growing up six thousand miles apart, Sami Altaher, M.S. Finance '01 and David DiPiero, MBA '01 were fortunate to connect. **In the fall of 1999, they met in Drexel's LeBow College of Business, and two years later, they launched a company that now serves clients across the globe.**

Raised in nearby New Jersey, DiPiero attended countless Drexel basketball games with his father, a Chemical Engineering '68 alumnus.

On the other side of the world in Amman, Jordan, Altaher studied accounting at the University of Jordan. "Drexel was my first stop in this country," says Altaher, who chose the school because it's one of the few places that offers a graduate degree in finance. Was he culture shocked? Hardly. "Philadelphia is a diverse town and people were welcoming and open-minded. The Drexel campus was also diverse, and that served Altaher and DiPiero well. "The graduate school had a large international component," says DiPiero. "It increased our exposure to other cultures and fueled our interest in global markets."

After graduation, Altaher was hired as a research analyst and DiPiero continued working in international oil. But a year later, they began a conversation that would lead them to found the company they own today, along with long-time friend Joseph Albertelli. "We started talking about our different resources and connections overseas," says DiPiero, "and we saw a need in the market for special financing. Domestic lenders do not lend against foreign assets, so we realized that if we partnered with banks and other financial institutions, we could provide this niche product." Their company, FGI Finance, is now considered one of the industry leaders in international receivable financing.

The quantitative focus of LeBow helped drive DiPiero and Altaher in their business, which was founded in Philadelphia in 2001; two years later, they relocated to New York City with eight full-time employees. Last year, they moved into an even larger office space. FGI now has 20 people in New York and 40 people worldwide.

Business has taken them throughout the Middle East, Asia, Latin America, and Europe. "We travel all over the world — and now, when people ask us where we went to school," says DiPiero, "they're aware of the Drexel name. In the short time since we graduated, President Papadakis single-handedly expanded the reach and reputation of Drexel. The image is now worldwide."