

MUHAMMAD BAGANA | BRANDEIS INTERNATIONAL BUSINESS SCHOOL

Bringing business savvy to health care

It was while serving as assistant to the head of a New Orleans community health clinic that Muhammad Bagana realized that if he wanted to help change international health care, he would need to learn more about management and how businesses operate.

Bagana had already been a practicing physician in his native Nigeria when he came to the U.S. in 2008 to pursue a master's at Tulane University. While working as an intern at Common Ground Health Clinic, which was established two weeks after floods devastated New Orleans in 2005, Bagana helped reorganize the clinic so it could qualify for federal grants.

"At the end of the day, you want to reduce cost and improve efficiency," he said. "Those skills I felt I was lacking, and that is why I decided I needed an MBA background."

Today, Bagana, 33, is in his second year of the MBA program at Brandeis International Business School in Waltham, with a focus in international business. He chose Brandeis in part because it has a lot of international students, he said.

"Having this group of students in social activities, it gives opportunity to work with diverse backgrounds," he said.

Diversity is something Bagana grew up with. The son of an imam from the north of Nigeria and

a Catholic mother from the south of the country, he attended a missionary Catholic School in Onitsha. He learned to speak four of the hundreds of languages in Nigeria.

"I was brought up in an environment where diversity and tolerance seem to be a hallmark," he said.

He attended Ahmadu Bello University in northern Nigeria and a year interning at National Hospital in Abuja. He was a general practitioner from 2005 until 2008, specializing in HIV and pediatrics, but came to see the health care system in that country as lacking leadership and good management.

"Managing the resources and improving operational effectiveness are problems in Nigeria," he said.

He hopes to one day return to Nigeria with his wife, a Zimbabwe native who works as an epidemiologist with the state, and their son. Once there, he hopes to use his business background to help solve the problems facing health care and says he could see himself in politics one day.

Bagana served as a strategy consulting intern at the Cambridge-based RA Pharmaceuticals this summer and will have the opportunity to work there again after graduation. He is also looking at insurance companies, believing the way to fix what's wrong with global health care is from within.

— Don Seiffert



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