

**G**rowing up in Nigeria, Sunkanmi Agbomeji knew he wanted to do one thing: change lives. At first, he thought he would do it by becoming a medical doctor. After graduating from medical school, his plans began to evolve, and although his path was unclear, his goal was not. He continued to help people. He just found several new ways to do so.

Agbomeji is a second year MBA candidate at the Hankamer School of Business. He came to Baylor after graduating from the University of Ibadan College of Medicine with a degree in physical therapy, and then working for four years in several industries, including healthcare, IT, energy and management consulting.

"I knew I wanted to save lives, change lives," he said. "My days of student leadership in college yielded me the opportunity to have hands-on training in leadership, management and business development."

But he knew those practical experiences were not enough to do everything he wanted. Agbomeji began searching for ways to learn more, and he found Baylor.

"When I began researching the top schools, I was primarily looking for scholarship and ethics," he said. "Baylor stood out because they merge quality education with real-time experience, and it sets itself apart with its focus on ethics. I found a very ethical set of people with good vision. I could not find that at any other business school."

Despite his love of Baylor, there was one thing Agbomeji found was lacking. He began asking professors and fellow students where he could find an organization that was both business focused and globally minded.

"I was looking for an organization that would provide a platform for graduate and undergraduate students, everyone on campus, to network and learn more about international business cultures. I went to a few organizations, and while there were many countries represented, there was no way to bring them all together."

So, joined by two of his classmates, Joy Lee and Vidur Moudgil, Agbomeji began developing just such an organization. In September 2012, after Agbomeji arrived on campus, they created Baylor's Global Business Connect (GBC), which was fully approved and registered by the university in January 2013.

GBC connects international and non-international students from all disciplines on campus, to help them develop global business perspectives and create connections. In addition to globally focused speakers who make presentations at meetings, the organization also creates opportunities to connect students with businesses that are offering international internships and paid positions. It connects students with Baylor alumni who are working in international business settings. The young organization currently has approximately 35 members.

"Around 60 percent of our members are very active," said Agbomeji. "The participation is very impressive. And we want to reach out to new members. We think we have a lot to offer."



## CONNECTING FOR POSITIVE GLOBAL CHANGE

BY FRANCI ROGERS

We prepare global mindsets and provide global opportunities, and we know there are students at Baylor who could benefit from that."

Jim Anderson, adjunct professor of International Marketing and manager of Baylor Business Global Connection at the McBride Center for International Business, is the faculty sponsor of GBC. He says he didn't hesitate for a moment when Agbomeji asked him to sponsor the new group.

At a welcome dinner for international students in the fall of 2012, Anderson was asked to speak about Baylor Business Global Connection. Global Connection works to fund research projects and continuing education of faculty members in the area of global business.

"After the event, a young man approached me and said he wanted to start a student organization just like Global Connection. He already had the basic ideas on paper, and he was ready to meet with me," Anderson said. "My first impression was very positive. He saw that Baylor had a void, and he wanted to fill it. Instead of complaining about it, he did something about it."

Creating a new organization on campus is not an easy task. As part of the application process the group has to form a constitution or create bylaws, a roster of participants is required, similar existing organizations must be researched, and an adviser must be secured.

"It's so tough to get an organization chartered," Anderson said. "There's so much work that goes into it, on top of an already full course load as a student. But Sunkanmi never gave up. He had this in mind the moment he stepped on campus, and he was determined. Now it's helping so many students have a cultural exchange with various cultures, to compare notes and learn about global business practices from so many areas of the world. I continue to be impressed."

While Agbomeji continues to enhance the education of his classmates here at Baylor, he continues to change lives in his native Nigeria.

Prior to coming to Baylor, Agbomeji answered a call from the Nigerian government, which was seeking proposals to reduce the staggering amount of youth unemployment in the country. Approximately 200,000 ideas were submitted. That field was narrowed to 50,000, then 10,000 and finally, five projects were chosen to receive the maximum grant award of about \$60,000 U.S. dollars. Agbomeji's company, Project ELAN, was one of the five. He attended a ceremony in Nigeria in November 2013 to receive the award at a presidential reception.

Agbomeji's vision was to create a program that gives young people the skills they need to become entrepreneurs and leaders through ongoing training and by meeting practical needs.

Project ELAN is a human and enterprise resource development drive. As an enterprise resource firm, it provides corporate ambiance, work stations and sustainable growth resources for start-ups in Nigeria. The human capital development arm trains and provides young people, ages 14 to 30 (with no college education), with entrepreneurial, vocational and artisan skill sets, places them in internships with local businesses, and thereafter sets them up for continued success in running their own businesses or working as employees.

"We have young entrepreneurs in Africa, but growth in small business is not usually sustainable and not successful. There is no corporate

culture, no continuous development," he said. "We want to change that by providing practical things, like shared equipment, and bigger things, like continuing education, to help young people from inception to productivity to success."

In addition to helping to enhance the futures of young Nigerians, Agbomeji believes it will also influence the future global business climate.

"Not every young African can have a good, quality education in school," Agbomeji said. "We hope to train young people in different areas, to fill the gaps, and instill a sense of fairness and ethics at the same time. I believe that Africa is the next big area for business growth and success."

In the two years since the program began, it has grown from assisting three new companies to 50 businesses in two cities.

During the ceremonies, Nigerian President Goodluck Jonathan not only congratulated the winners on their successes, but asked them to act as mentors to the second round of competitors in their bid for youth empowerment and employment.

Agbomeji is more than happy to offer assistance. "The demand is there; we need to spread," he said. And, like almost everyone who's met Agbomeji, Anderson has no doubt that he will continue to change lives.

"I look at young people like Sunkanmi, and I think, 'these are the ones who are going to save the world,'" Anderson said. "I always introduce him as the future president of Nigeria. And I really do think that much of his character. He is going to continue to do great things."

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