...there weren't any graduate programs in Nigeria that offered the sort of depth I wanted, I finally decided to come to the U.S. Michigan was ranked number one in Health Management and Policy, and so I applied to Michigan.

By Jeff Mortimer

Edward OKEKE

Why are so many physicians coming to the United States and Europe from developing countries? Edward Okeke, a doctorate candidate in Health Management and Policy in the University of Michigan School of Public Health, is one of them, and he remembers a heart-breaking incident that fueled his own disillusionment.

After completing his MD in his native Nigeria, he spent a year working as a house officer at a teaching hospital in Nnewi, and one night, a gas cylinder explosion started a fire in the women's dormitory. Eight victims, some of them with major burns, were brought to the hospital's emergency room.

"We didn't have a burn unit," he recalls. "They were there for a couple of days, then we had to move some attempt to move them to a larger regional teaching hospital that had a burn unit, which was two and a half hours away. Only one of them survived. If they had been here, in the hours away. Only one of them survived. If they had been here, in the burn unit, which was two and a half hours away."

The factors that account for the so-called medical brain drain, and its effects, are what his dissertation will be about. "People assume that it's because the countries are poor," he says, "like 'it's the economy, stupid,' and while this seems intuitively plausible, empirical evidence for it is hard to come by." Testing this hypothesis is therefore the focus of one of his dissertation papers. "Many people have advocated for increasing doctors' salaries as a way to reduce brain drain," he says, but it is by no means clear that raising doctors' wages will reduce the number of doctors leaving. "In countries where doctors are very poor, it is possible that the cost of migration itself may act as a barrier to migration, so that if doctors are paid more, one might get the perverse result of seeing the rate of migration increase because now more people can afford to go."

The answers are complex and elusive. So Okeke's work. After graduation, he plans to return to Nigeria, but his ultimate vision is even more far-reaching. "My dream job would be to work in international health policy at a place like the World Bank for the World Health Organization, where developing countries come for expert advice," he says. "Nigeria, for example, is setting up a health insurance system. Who is going to run it? Do we have the resources? Do we have the human capital? That's the sort of thing I'd like to help with."

Okeke says one of the reasons he picked his dissertation topic was because "I'm on the phone a lot to Nigeria, and literally every time I call someone, I hear of another classmate who has left."

So did he, but he's going back.

By Jeff Mortimer

Frank Beaver chose the University of Michigan for his doctoral work in part because he wanted to study with Kenneth Rowe, who had been Arthur Miller's writing teacher. But the most enduring benefit of that class may have been some advice he got from a student who shared a desk with him.

"Go to Rackham," he said. "Go to Rackham, they have a lovely room in the basement where you can have your lunch and great study rooms upstairs," recalls Beaver, the Arthur F. Thurnau Professor of Communication. "I wrote my dissertation on the second floor. I've written and edited six books in that one chair at Rackham."

"I knew that I was interested in international health policy at a place like the World Bank or the World Health Organization, where developing countries come for expert advice. But I thought that's something I actually knew about the Challenge," Beaver admits. "I had been so committed to Rackham and what they do in their various programs that I already planned to make that organization that I give to regularly."

When he arrived in Ann Arbor in 1967, Beaver found film courses scattered among a dozen departments. "Students could pick a course here and a course there and everyone saw Potemkin twelve times," he says. "Then an undergraduate named Steve Fetter went and got the syllabi and interviewed all the film teachers. Out of that came the decision to have an interdepartmental undergraduate film and video program that eventually became what is now Screen Arts and Culture, a full program that offers BA, MA and PhDs in film."

Beaver grew up in Statesville, N.C., earned his first two degrees at the University of North Carolina, then served a tour of duty in Vietnam as an Army intelligence officer. "I was trained at Chapel Hill to be a live television director," he says, "but I had two little kids when I got out of the Army, and Greenwich Village didn't sound like a good idea."

The academy did, however: "My teachers and mentors that I loved so much were people who had lovely careers as critics and as writers, and taught, and I thought that's something I'd love to do," he says. "After stints on the faculty at Memphis State and North Carolina, he began his long association with Michigan."

He returned to Vietnam in 2007 for the first time in 45 years to work on his current project, a survey of films made by so-called Viet Kieu, Vietnamese who fled after the fall of Saigon in 1975 and their descendants, many of whom are now returning.

"It was a wonderful, heart-warming experience for me," he says. "They're making films about the motherland that are truly beautiful but have very little to do with the war. Nearly 60 percent of the Vietnamese alive today were born after it ended, so Viet Kieu films and filmmakers are constituting a previously unseen view of Vietnam in the West."

"It's a whole new learning experience."

Frank BEAVER