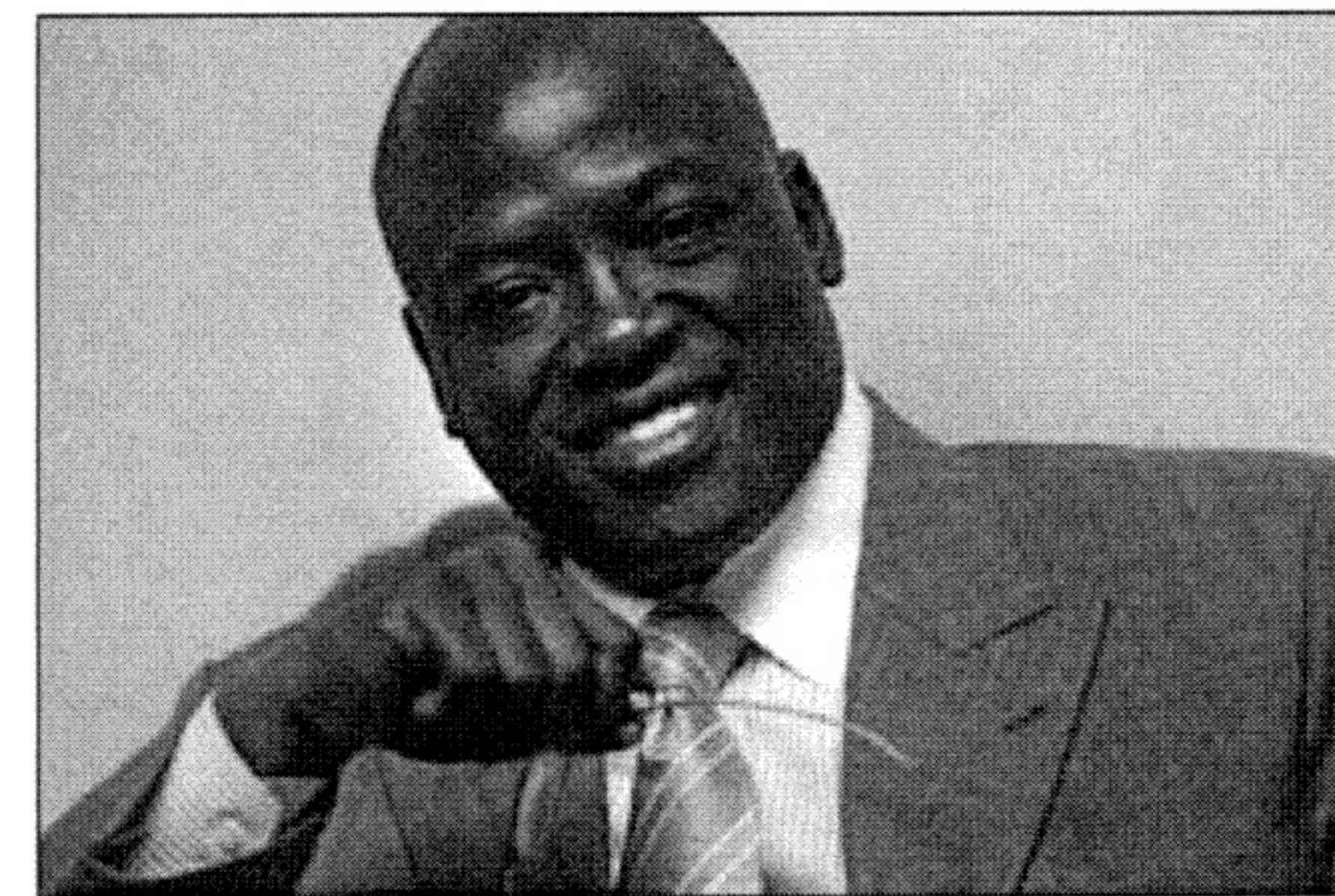


Worldwide education engages Webster business school dean

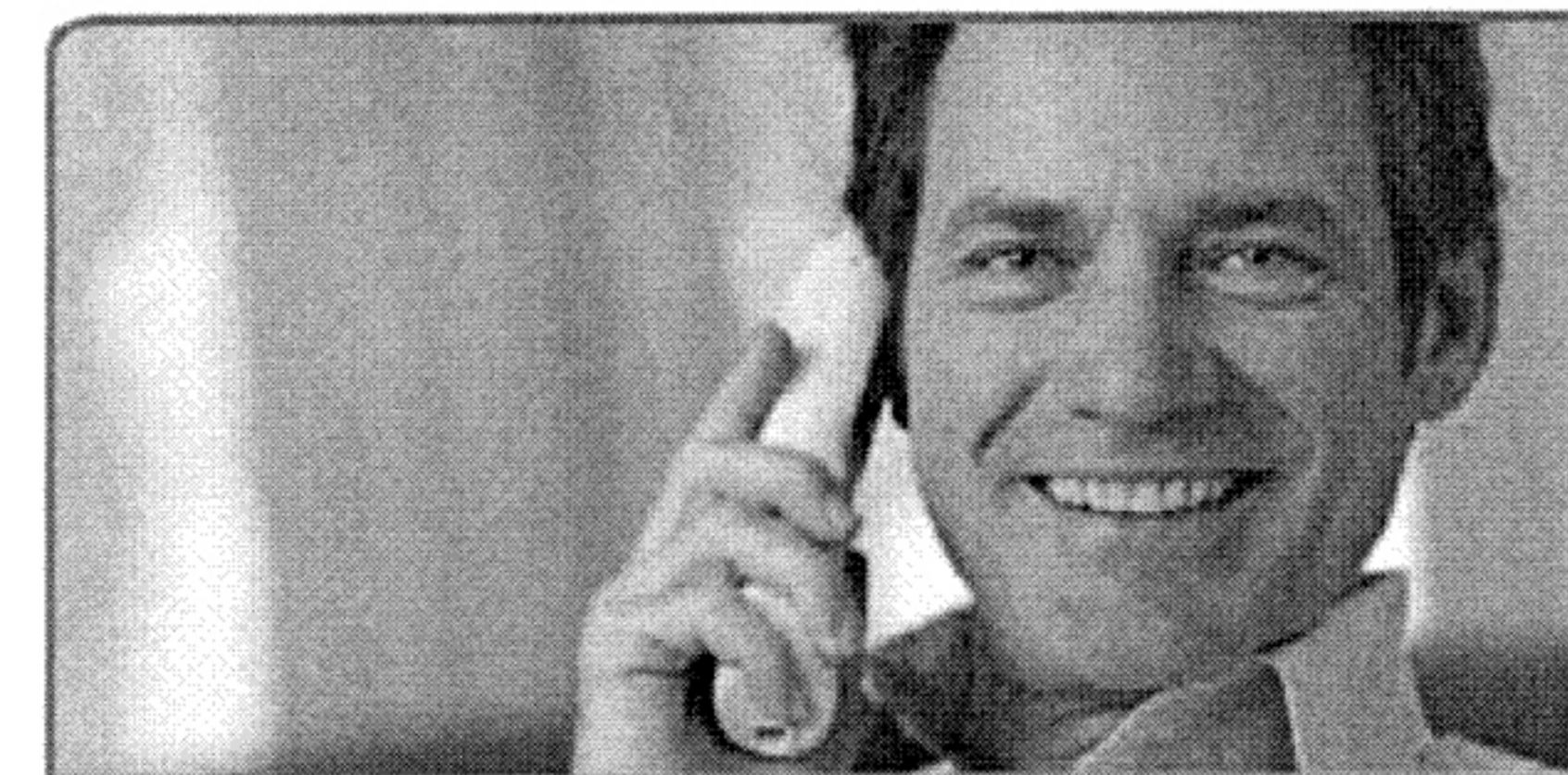
By [Mary Jo Feldstein](#)
ST. LOUIS POST-DISPATCH
01/19/2007



Benjamin Akande is the dean of the Webster University School of Business and Technology.
(Kevin Manning/P-D)

that we're in tune with the business environment. One of our favorite programs ... is a decision support certificate. It essentially enables people to use technology ... to garner data to make better decisions in their businesses. This is cutting-edge stuff, and we've been able to have our faculty and the computer science center converge and create something that I think is extremely useful.

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individuals in this area to be better leaders, to be functional leaders, to be able to make responsible decisions. And to understand the overall dynamics that are needed to be a corporate manager.

How do you teach leadership?

I think leadership is a phenomenon that can be taught. I think that you teach it by embedding the basic prerequisites and concepts of successful leadership and also the great examples of failed leadership in your curriculum. We have a master's degree in leadership in management, which really focuses on developing the sub-skills of managing people — motivating people, understanding dynamics of group and teamwork. What we've also tried to do ... is we've exposed them to some of the greatest leaders of our time, both locally and also internationally, by bringing them to this campus and having them speak to us and share their leadership journey.

It seems like so much more of education has become focused on attracting students and marketing. Does advertising take up too much of your day?

Institutions of higher learning today ... are trying to make the case to students you need to come to us because we can do more for you. If you're in a position where you are in a middle-level management area ... and you want to move up the organizational chain and understand

What's happened with the business school since you took over?

I've seen a dramatic improvement, particularly as it relates to the substance of our program but more importantly the results. In the time that I've been here we've seen a significant improvement in our curriculum and a remarkable increase in the faculty, full-time faculty.

How have the academics changed?

We've done a complete overview of our programs to make sure

We partnered with our colleagues in the (other) schools at Webster to create an entrepreneurship program that enables people to be better businesspeople, to be able to understand how to make a case, how to prepare a business plan.

How do you appeal to working adults?

Our MBA is particularly designed for working adults. What we do at Webster, and I think what we do better than anybody else, is to focus on the middle-level structure of management. Those that are between supervision and leadership. Our curriculum has been designed to sort of prepare

Benjamin Ola Akande, a native of Nigeria, has had some strange experiences since coming to the United States to attend school. He proposed to his wife, a native Nigerian, the day they met while students in Oklahoma. But it took her five years and another chance meeting to go on a date with him. Then, when a St. Louis acquaintance asked where he went to school, Akande joked, "Nigerian High." The St. Louisan asked him if the school was in north St. Louis County. Akande probably still will have strange encounters if he returns to Nigeria one day. He hopes to enter the country's political fray if he does. In the interview, Akande focuses on Webster University's business school and how it has changed since he became dean in 2000.

Benjamin Ola Akande
Dean, Webster University School of Business

Age: 44

Education: Wayland Baptist University, Plainview, Texas, bachelor of science in business administration; University of Oklahoma, master of public administration, master of arts in economics, and a doctorate in economics; J. Edgar Hoover School of Government Executive Program at Harvard University, completed postdoctoral studies in leadership

Career: 1995-2000, Wayland Baptist University headed the School of Business.

Personal: Lives in Town and Country with his wife Bola, and their three daughters.

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