

Public Diplomacy in Vietnam: Opportunities in Education



“One of the three major priorities that I have is education. I would like to work very hard to help the Government of Vietnam strengthen its own education infrastructure and I have made a commitment that I will work very hard to try to double the number of students that we send from Vietnam to American schools.”

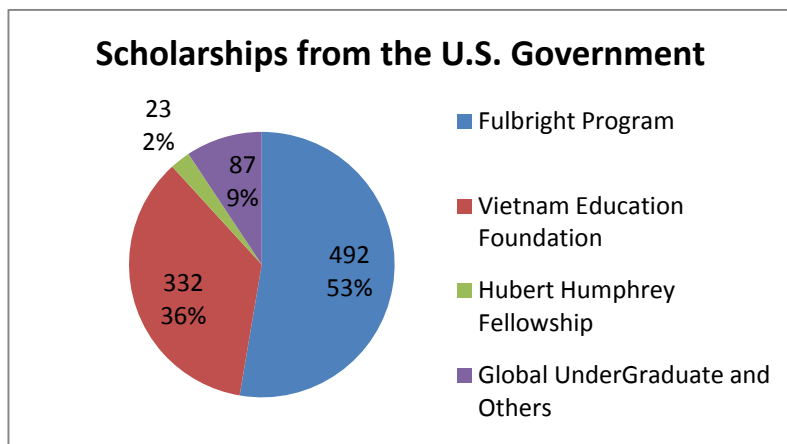
- U.S. Ambassador to Vietnam Michael W. Michalak –

The governments of Vietnam and the United States created the U.S.-Vietnam Education Task Force in June 2008 to produce recommendations for both governments on ways to strengthen U.S.-Vietnamese higher education cooperation. The Task Force’s Final Report of September 30, 2009 contained suggestions for support of public-private sector partnerships to improve the Vietnamese educational system and increase the number of Vietnamese studying in the U.S. The Report calls for bilateral exploration of an American-style university in Vietnam, improved English language teaching, and closer cooperation between American institutions and Vietnamese universities.

In 2008, 2009, and 2010, Ambassador Michalak hosted three consecutive Education Conferences to provide a forum for discussions on ways to reach key educational goals identified in the Final Report. The number of attendees tripled from 229 in 2008 to over 600 in 2010. The numbers for participating organizations show another exciting trend as well: in 2008, 92 American and 17 Vietnamese educational institutions attended; by 2010, the number of participating American organizations had grown to 138 and the number of Vietnamese institutions had jumped to an impressive 143!

U.S. Government Educational Programs: since 1995, the Mission has provided nearly 1,000 degree and non-degree scholarships with a total spending of \$75 million.

The **Fulbright Program** has operated in Vietnam since 1992 with gratifying results. Each year, the program sends 25-30 Vietnamese students for a two-year Master’s degree study and 10 Vietnamese scholars for an entire year of research at U.S. universities. The program also brings annually to Vietnam 10 U.S. students, 10 scholars, 15 ETA (English Teaching Assistant) and 5-10 senior specialists to train faculty and develop projects to improve the quality of teaching and the system of administration at Vietnamese universities. The yearly cost for the Fulbright Program is \$2.4 million.



The **Vietnam Education Foundation** provides scholarships for Ph.D. studies in the hard sciences for over 40 Vietnamese students per year and brings up to 10 American professors here to work with Vietnamese universities. VEF has a yearly budget of \$5 million.

The Hubert Humphrey Fellowship Program is a one-year, non-degree, academic and research administration program. Over the last 15 years, it has provided 23 fellowships with a total cost of \$1,265,000.

The Global Undergraduate, Intensive English and other programs provide 90 Vietnamese students, lecturers, educators and youth leaders with long and short term study programs in the United States.

The EducationUSA Advising Centers in Hanoi and HCMC started operating under PAS in summer 2010. These centers will provide free information and advice to students applying to study in the United States.

In 2009, **12,823** students from Vietnam were studying in the United States (up 46.2% from the previous year). Vietnam has advanced to eight place in the list of countries sending students to the United States, moving up from thirteenth place in the 2008 academic year.



U.S. Assistant Secretary of State Maura Harty Talking to High Students on Studying in the United States.

Academic Level: The majority of Vietnamese students studying abroad are at the undergraduate level. In 2008/09, the breakdown was as follows:

- 72.1% Undergraduate
- 15.2% Graduate students
- 9.9% Other
- 2.8% OPT (Optional Practical Training)

Year	# of Students from Vietnam	% of Total Foreign Students in US	# of US Study Abroad Students Going to Vietnam
2008/09	12,823	1.9%	n/a
2007/08	8,769	1.4%	652 (up 18.5%)
2006/07	6,036	1.0%	550
2005/06	4,597	0.8%	390
2004/05	3,670	0.6%	346
2003/04	3,165	0.6%	283
2002/03	2,722	0.5%	286
2001/02	2,531	0.4%	218
2000/01	2,022	0.4%	188
1999/00	2,266	0.4%	142
1998/99	1,587	0.3%	95