

**AMERICAN SUPPORT
FOR EDUCATION IN VIETNAM:
A BRAINSTOMING CONFERENCE
FOR AMERICAN STAKEHOLDERS**

**CONVENED AND HOSTED BY
AMBASSADOR MICHAEL W. MICHALAK**

*Sofitel Plaza, Hanoi, Vietnam
January 24-25, 2008*

CONFERENCE REPORT

Contents

Executive Summary	2
Welcome Remarks by Ambassador Michael W. Michalak	4
Schedule	8
Summary of Conference Sessions	12
Participants	36
Participating American Institutions	53
<i>Universities and Colleges</i>	<i>53</i>
<i>NGOs and Educational Organizations</i>	<i>62</i>
<i>Companies With Operations in Vietnam</i>	<i>67</i>
<i>Observers</i>	<i>71</i>
<i>U.S. Government Educational Programs</i>	<i>74</i>
Contact Information	77



Organized by the U.S. Embassy, Hanoi

**American Support for Education in Vietnam:
A Brainstorming Conference for American Stakeholders**

Convened and hosted by Ambassador Michael W. Michalak

**Sofitel Plaza, Hanoi, Vietnam
January 24-25, 2008**

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Conference Events

This Conference brought almost 200 American stakeholders in education in Vietnam together for two days of brainstorming sessions to discuss how closer cooperation between them can enhance their educational programs. Representing 25 American companies, 43 American educational institutions, 21 American NGOs, and 4 U.S. Government educational programs, the participants provided a broad range of viewpoints and perspectives on many educational subjects, including ways that public sector-private sector partnerships could help them reach three key goals:

- Increasing the flow of Vietnamese students to the United States;
- Establishing more and deeper links between American and Vietnamese universities;
- Meeting the education and training needs of American companies in Vietnam.

The conference also included an evening reception at which dozens of Vietnamese officials, academics, and business leaders joined the Conference participants for food, drinks and informal conversations on education in Vietnam.

To take advantage of the presence of so many representatives of American schools, a Higher Education Fair was held the day after the Conference, which enabled 25 American universities, colleges and other educational organizations to present information about their programs to, and answer questions from, more than 800 Vietnamese students.

Results of the Conference

As a result of the presentations and discussions that took place at the Conference, American stakeholders are much more aware of the activities of other organizations, and of the opportunities for cooperation with them.

American companies, concerned about the limited numbers of educated managers and trained workers in the Vietnamese labor pool, better understand how other companies have dealt with this problem, and are more aware of how they can work with American and Vietnamese universities to establish training programs to meet their needs.

American universities with programs in Vietnam learned, in particular, how their programs with Vietnamese universities can be tailored to meet the demands of the Vietnamese economy and of American companies for employees with critical-thinking and problem-solving abilities, in addition to technical skills.

Participants appreciated learning more about U.S. Government educational programs in Vietnam, and are aware that both the Fulbright Program in Vietnam and the Vietnam Education Foundation are now authorized to accept contributions from private sources of funding in order to increase the number of scholarships they can offer to Vietnamese students.

Representatives from American universities appeared eager to increase the number of students from Vietnam, and benefited from discussions about ways to identify and recruit students. The discussions about student visas enabled Consular officers to understand better the concerns of universities and applicants, and enabled Conference participants to have a better understanding of the factors that Consular officers take into consideration (see Session #6).

Throughout the Conference, participants emphasized the critical importance of English language skills for Vietnamese students and workers, and proposed a variety of ideas to help them acquire those skills.

With information and ideas from this Conference, Ambassador Michael W. Michalak is now prepared to meet with the Government of Vietnam to move the dialogue on education forward. He plans to inform Vietnamese leaders about the educational activities of American organizations in Vietnam and get their ideas on what other activities would be appropriate for them. He will also be able to advise the leaders about steps they can take to facilitate the programs American organizations are undertaking to assist Vietnamese universities and colleges. Finally, he will be able to convey to the leaders ideas that arose at the Conference, such as that of creating Special Education Zones for foreign universities.

Conference Reports

This Report is intended to capture the most important of the wide range of comments made at the Conference. It is not intended necessarily to provide solutions, but to ensure that the information and ideas that arose during the Conference are widely available to those who might find them relevant for their own activities in Vietnam.

In addition to this Report, the Public Affairs Section of the U.S. Embassy in Hanoi is also preparing a second report, which consists of a comprehensive list of all American organizations with educational programs in Vietnam, information about the programs, and contact information for those in charge of them.

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**WELCOME REMARKS BY
AMBASSADOR MICHAEL W. MICHALAK**

Conference participants and observers,

Good morning, ladies and gentlemen!

Before I read this, I want to personally say how pleased and how proud I am to see so many people in this room. I'm so glad that you all have heard the message that we need to work together to do what we can to help Vietnam meet the educational needs of its own society, and also of the burgeoning companies that are all flocking to Vietnam because of the excellent investment climate here.

We hope through this conference we can find some ways to help make that investment climate even better and to make this an even better place to live and to work. It's already really good, I think.

I am very pleased to welcome you to this event -- "American Support for Education in Vietnam: A Brainstorming Conference for American Stakeholders."

This Conference, as you know, is designed to be a forum for American stakeholders in education in Vietnam to discuss how American private sector-public sector cooperation can enhance the efforts of all participants to reach broad educational goals.

Even before arriving in Vietnam five months ago, I was aware that education is a key component of the relationship between the United States and Vietnam. I was aware of the importance of educational exchanges, and in my Confirmation Hearing last July, I called for the number of Vietnamese students at American universities and colleges to double during my tenure. I was also aware that Vietnamese leaders, including Prime Minister Dung and President Triet, had formally requested American and other international assistance to help Vietnam train its next generation and modernize its educational system.

Since arriving in Vietnam, I have made education one of the three main priorities of the U.S. Mission here. I've discussed possible areas of U.S.-Vietnamese cooperation in education frequently with Vietnamese officials, as well as with many of you. Those discussions have convinced me that the United States has much to offer

Vietnam, but also that there is no common or overall understanding of the many programs and initiatives that are underway in the relationship.

Last Fall, I determined that what we can usefully do at this stage is to bring together American business, academic, and non-governmental organizations which share an interest in U.S.-Vietnam education ties to discuss what we are all doing as well as how we can enhance those efforts. And I am truly delighted that so many share this vision and have agreed to join me here. We now have two days to brainstorm and share ideas on how we can:

- (1) Further increase the number of Vietnamese students studying in the United States;
- (2) How we can enrich on-going university-to-university relationships;
- (3) And how we can help Vietnam meet its needs for skilled workers, in particular the needs of American companies working here; and finally,
- (4) How we may be able to develop public-private partnerships to leverage the strengths that we separately bring to the table in all these areas.

In our discussions, I think some of you may be surprised at the richness of our current efforts. For example, I am very proud of our well-established Fulbright Program, which has helped over 400 Vietnamese earn advanced degrees in the United States, while bringing hundreds of Americans here, over the past 14 years. The associated Fulbright Economic Training Center is a wonderfully innovative, intensive one-year program for 70 Vietnamese professionals each year. The Vietnam Education Foundation has already launched the studies of well over 200 Vietnamese scientists in the United States.

But I am not here to talk about our own accomplishments. I also want to stress that one of my personal goals over these two days is to create an atmosphere in which we discuss how we all – and especially the Embassy and the U.S. Government -- can do it better. If you don't believe me, take a look at the title for Session #6. If we want results, we need to be open and constructive, but also honest and straightforward. You will find me, my deputy, Jon Aloisi, and over 20 members of the Embassy staff and the staff from the Consulate General down in Ho Chi Minh City available here at the conference, Ken Fairfax at the Consulate General is also here, and I hope you'll take the opportunity to meet and talk with all of us because you'll find number one you'll find us very interested in what you have to say, and number two hopefully we may even have some ideas that are worth continuing to talk about.

I have specific concerns about the growing problem that many American companies face in term of the difficulty of hiring qualified staff and the fact that many American universities seem to be facing challenges in establishing programs in Vietnam. These are key topics for me, and I hope through our discussions that we can clarify some ways forward to address these issues. I also hope to learn more about the role of NGOs in meeting Vietnam's educational goals. There are systemic issues that sometimes frustrate progress, such as the relatively low level of English-language

competence. On the part of the U.S. Government, we are looking at ways to ramp up our current efforts in the field of English language teaching proficiency. And we'd like to know what are your strategies, and how can we work better together.

I have convened this Conference so that stakeholders can discuss common challenges and ways they can work together to overcome them. American companies, for instance, by sharing information on their activities and challenges, might be better able to find common solutions by working together cooperatively rather than independently. Universities, also, might find that sharing their thoughts and ideas is an effective way to uncover efficient and effective responses to the problems they face in organizing educational exchange programs. If we can decide on areas that can and should be addressed, the U.S. Government can perhaps help you bring them to the attention of Vietnamese authorities and overcome them.

But even more important than cooperation within groups is wider cooperation between groups. American universities, colleges and NGOs may well hold some of the keys to optimal solutions for the problems faced by American companies. American companies and NGOs may well have ideas that will help American universities establish better and stronger linkages with their Vietnamese counterparts.

The sessions of this Conference address a wide range of issues related to education. Not every session may be of direct interest to every participant. However, my hope is that by bringing stakeholders from different types of organizations together for brainstorming sessions, this Conference will provide the conditions in which cross-fertilization of ideas between companies, schools, and NGOs can take place.

I thus encourage all of you to make the most of each session in this Conference. I hope that speakers, in addition to presenting – and presenting briefly please -- information about their organizations' activities, will also tell us about problems, solutions, and ideas that will spark creative thinking in the following discussions. I hope that moderators will work to open up the floor as much as possible so that brainstorming can occur. Ideally, we will see discussions in which several people toss out ideas, others comment and add their own perspectives in the process, creating a continuous cycle in which everyone is involved in listening, thinking, and contributing.

The Conference's formal sessions are meant only to launch discussions that will continue after the formal sessions ends. We have scheduled lengthy breaks between sessions, and arranged for several breakout rooms, to facilitate continuing informal discussions among smaller groups.

These discussions – formal and informal -- can result in ideas about how we can all work together to accomplish more together than we could have separately. They can identify types of public sector-private sector partnerships that will provide benefits for the Vietnamese educational system as well as American stakeholders – partnerships that don't cost a lot and don't require large bureaucracies. Exactly what form those partnerships could take, will, I hope, become apparent during our exchanges over the next two days.

Although this Conference is designed to be a brainstorming session for American stakeholders, we have also invited a number of key Vietnamese officials to attend as observers. In addition, I have invited many more Vietnamese officials and university representatives to the reception this evening, which will give all of you a chance to further discuss collaboration on important educational projects.

I view this conference as the first step in a long-term dialogue between the United States and Vietnam on education and how we can work together to promote the betterment of education here in Vietnam. At the end of the Conference, I hope to be able to report to Deputy Prime Minister Nhan what kinds of things we've talked about and tell him that now that we all understand what we're doing currently, what are the things that the Government of Vietnam thinks that we can do in addition to what we are doing. So, whether we'll have another large follow-on conference or a series of a smaller follow-on conferences, I'd view this as the first step in a continuing interchange with the Government of Vietnam and with all of you represented here today.

I will be at the Conference for most of the next two days, and look forward to having the chance to talk with each of you about how your organization can participate in and benefit from the kind of cooperation that we want to see here today.

I know that all of you are investing considerable time and resources to attend this Conference and I am really, truly grateful for your coming, and hope that you will find the discussions to be informative, productive, and enjoyable. If nothing else, for me this is the best networking opportunity I've had since APEC in 2006!

So anyway, that's enough for me. We're going hear from a representative from the Government of Vietnam next, and I look forward to talking to all of you and having a good conference.

Thank you again for coming.

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**Sofitel Plaza, Hanoi, Vietnam
January 24-25, 2008**

Conference Schedule

Thursday, January 24, 2008	
8:30 – 9:00	<p>Opening Ceremony</p> <p>Welcome Remarks:</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">His Excellency Ambassador Michael W. Michalak</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">Dr. Nguyen Thi Le Huong, Vice Director General, Department of Higher Education, Ministry of Education and Training</p>
9:00 – 10:30	<p>Session 1: American Companies in Vietnam: Human Resource Needs and Educational Programs</p> <p>Moderator: Donald Nay, Commercial Counselor, U.S. Embassy, Hanoi</p> <p>Speakers:</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;"><i>Jeff Prunty, Director, Vietnam Finance, Intel Products Vietnam</i></p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;"><i>Don Brown, Director of Global Strategy, Boeing</i></p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;"><i>Henry Nguyen, Managing General Partner, IGD Ventures Vietnam</i></p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;"><i>Danny Ong, Business, Marketing, and Operation Director, Microsoft Vietnam</i></p> <p>Discussion</p>
10:30 – 11:00	Break

11:00 – 12:00	<p>Session 2: U.S. Government Sponsored Educational Programs</p> <p>Moderator: Ken Fairfax, Consul General, U.S. Consulate General, Ho Chi Minh City</p> <p>Speakers:</p> <p><i>Thomas Vallely, Director, Fulbright Economics Teaching Program (FETP)</i></p> <p><i>Dr. Vo Van Toi, Executive Director, Vietnam Education Foundation (VEF)</i></p> <p><i>Dr. Tran Xuan Thao, Director, Fulbright Program in Vietnam</i></p> <p>Discussion</p>
12:00 – 1:15	<p>Lunch</p>
1:15 – 2:45	<p>Session 3: American Universities: Educational Programs in Vietnam</p> <p>Moderator: Dr. Steve Maxner, Director, The Vietnam Center, Texas Tech University</p> <p>Speakers:</p> <p><i>Dr. Gil Latz, Vice Provost, Portland State University</i></p> <p><i>Andrew Tran, California State University System</i></p> <p><i>Dr. Tung Bui, Graduate Chair and Director, Ph.D Program of International Management, Shidler College of Business, University of Hawaii</i></p> <p>Discussion</p>
2:45 – 3:15	<p>Break</p>

3:15 – 4:30	<p>Session 4: American NGOs: Education Programs in Vietnam</p> <p>Moderator: Dr. Terance W. Bigalke, Director of Education, East-West Center</p> <p>Speakers:</p> <p><i>Michael DiGregorio, Program Officer, Ford Foundation</i></p> <p><i>Phan Truc Quynh, Programme Associate for Education, Atlantic Philanthropies</i></p> <p><i>Al DeMatteis, General Director, Delta Construction Management Company; & Chairman, DeMatteis Family Charitable Foundation</i></p> <p>Discussion</p>
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6:30 – 8:30	<p>Reception Hosted by Ambassador Michael W. Michalak</p>
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<p>Friday, January 25, 2008</p>	
8:30 – 8:45	<p>Day #2 Opening</p> <p>Welcome Remarks:</p> <p>Ambassador Michael W. Michalak</p>
8:45 – 9:45	<p>Session 5: Promoting Study in the United States</p> <p>Moderator: Dr. Harry Norman, Dean, University Extended Education, California State University, Fullerton</p> <p>Speakers:</p> <p><i>Dr. Mark Ashwill, Vietnam Country Director, Institute of International Education (IIE)</i></p> <p><i>Tu Anh Vu, President, Vietnamese Student Association, University of Hawaii</i></p> <p><i>Mark Harris, President and CEO, ELS Language Centers</i></p> <p>Discussion</p>

9:45 – 10:15	<p>Session 6: Visas: Tell Us How We Can Do Better</p> <p>Moderator: Ambassador Michael W. Michalak</p> <p>Speakers:</p> <p><i>Eric Alexander, Counselor for Consular Affairs, U.S. Embassy, Hanoi</i></p> <p><i>Rachel Mueller, Consular Officer, U.S. Consulate General, Ho Chi Minh City</i></p> <p>Discussion</p>
10:15 – 10:45	<p>Break</p>
10:45 – 12:00	<p>Session 7: Public Sector-Private Sector Partnerships</p> <p>Moderator: Ambassador Raymond Burghardt, Former U.S. Ambassador to Vietnam; Director, East-West Seminars, East-West Center</p> <p>Speakers:</p> <p><i>Virginia Foote, President, U.S.-Vietnam Trade Council, Education Forum</i></p> <p><i>Professor Augustine Vinh, Administrator, Executive MBA Program, Shidler College of Business, University of Hawaii</i></p> <p>Discussion</p>
12:00 – 1:15	<p>Lunch</p>
1:15 – 2:30	<p>Session 8: Conclusion and Wrap-Up</p> <p>Moderators: Ambassador Michael W. Michalak and Ken Fairfax, Consul General, U.S. Consulate General, Ho Chi Minh City</p>

SUMMARY OF CONFERENCE SESSIONS

Session 1: American Companies in Vietnam: Human Resource Needs and Educational Programs

Moderator: Donald Nay, Counselor for Commercial Affairs, U.S. Embassy, Hanoi

Speakers:

Jeff Prunty, Director, Vietnam Finance, Intel Products Vietnam

Don Brown, Director of Global Strategy, Boeing

*Henry Nguyen, Managing General Partner,
IGD Ventures Vietnam*

*Danny Ong, Business, Marketing, and Operation Director,
Microsoft Vietnam*

Donald Nay noted the U.S. Mission's interest in seeing bilateral educational activity expand. He noted that education plays a major role in the development of a country from low to middle to developed status, and cited Korea as an example of a rare example of a country that has moved from lowest to highest status. He also noted that the Foreign Commercial Service (FCS) considers study in the U.S. to be an export, one that generates billions of dollars in revenue on an annual basis, and is working to promote it.

Nay noted that since joining the WTO, Vietnam has had one of Asia's fastest growing economies, with GDP growth projected at 8.5% in 2007. An increasing supply of skilled labor and educated managers will be a key factor in whether this rate of economic growth will continue.

Nay posed the following questions and concerns to be addressed in this Session:

- How are American companies using educational and training programs and resources to address their needs?
- What can the U.S. Government do to assist in addressing these challenges?
- Is there a particular message we need to convey to the Ministry of Education and Training (MOET) and other GVN stakeholders?
- What is AmCham doing to address human resource and education challenges?
- As this Conference is an excellent opportunity for cross fertilization of ideas, what role do U.S. companies see for U.S. educational institutions to address the companies' needs?

Don Brown, Director of Global Strategy, Boeing, described the following Boeing challenges and activities that might be relevant for other American companies in Vietnam:

- Many industries require more workers and managers than are being produced by the Vietnamese university system. Additional companies coming into Vietnam could cause the labor market to dry up.

- Boeing’s efforts to meet this challenge includes identifying strategic American and Vietnamese universities, then bringing them together to set up joint programs can will produce workers and managers with the skills Boeing needs. Joint programs include faculty exchanges and assistance to help Vietnamese universities meet U.S. accreditation standards.
- Boeing has launched 50 educational projects. The ten that were most successful in overcoming the problems of funding and coordinating the efforts of participating universities were those in which universities made extra efforts to solve whatever problems arose.
- Boeing has launched many English language projects to help address the need for English language skills among its employees.

Henry Nguyen, Managing General Partner, IGD Ventures Vietnam, raised the following points in his opening remarks:

- Human Resources are a limiting factor for many companies his venture capital firm works with in Vietnam.
- The practical skills and knowledge needed to develop and build great businesses are acquired through activity, not in a classroom. Many businesses, but the experience acquired through the effort enables founders to launch successful businesses in future efforts.
- The need to “professionalize entrepreneurship” to build the leadership capacity that is needed to run successful businesses.

Danny Ong, Business, Marketing, and Operations Director, Microsoft presented the following information and ideas for discussion:

- If you stop learning, you start dying. Continuous learning is a Microsoft value.
- Vietnam needs to move up the value chain, from “made in Vietnam,” to “designed in Vietnam.”
- Vietnamese students are incredibly smart people. The country placed 2nd in a recent worldwide competition.
- Importance not only of basic teaching, but also of hands-on one-on-one coaching.

Jeff Prunty, Director, Vietnam Finance, Intel Products Vietnam, presented the following information and ideas:

- Intel is making a big investment in Vietnam, especially in the areas of end product production and by setting up a test facility. 25 percent of all worldwide capacity will be in Vietnam.
- H/R is the biggest challenge. It relies on the Vietnamese educational system, and 70 percent of hires are new graduates. However, most workers hired need additional technical training.
- To deal with the H/R problem, Intel recently signed MOUs with four universities, two in HCMC, one in Danang, one in Hanoi, to improve their curriculum and practical applications, to set up labs, and to provide technical mentoring.

- Intel has also set up programs to train teachers in how to use new technology in classrooms. 25,000 teachers have already been trained; another 15,000 will be trained this year.
- The importance of donating laptop computers to children – getting technology into the hands of children will support the industry and overall economy in the future.
- Intel is talking with public and private U.S. universities about setting up operations in the HCMC High Tech Park to meet the needs of both Intel and the local economy.

Ideas that arose during the discussion in Session #1:

Limited human resources

- By one estimate, the HCM City's vocational schools will be able to supply only about 15 percent of the 500,000 workers that companies in the HCM City Industrial Park and Export Processing Zone Authority (HEPZA) will need through 2010.
- One company had to test over 2,000 recent graduates to find 90 who were qualified. Only 40 of those 90 had the necessary communication skills and were hired.

Educational activities of American companies

- American companies are definitely not working together, but tackling problems separately.
- Not many technical companies are successful. This is a fact of life everywhere.
- Distinction between training programs that provide human resources with necessary skills now, vs. educational programs that will provide educated managers and skilled workers a decade from now means companies must develop two types of educational programs.
- One company sends 40-50 employees to Malaysia and China each year for experience and knowledge that they bring back to Vietnam. This training program helps the company, the individuals, and Vietnam.

Benefits of Liberal Arts Education

- Many speakers addressed the need for liberal arts education, which would build students' critical thinking skills and problem solving abilities. Need to develop minds capable of solving a variety of fundamental problems, including social problems, rather than just receive technical training. Importance of social sciences, liberal arts, literature and arts, interdisciplinary approach to graduate school.
- Importance of leadership skills, the ability to design solutions and implement them, and the know-how to build a business whose staff that knows how to solve problems. Need for greater precision in thinking – need ability to define issues, see obstacles, analyze solutions. Need for educational management courses that develop ability to teach to think, how to solve problems.

- Too much education in Vietnam is science and technology, focused too much on technical skills and requiring too much rote learning. Need to create incentives for liberal arts study in Vietnamese schools. Programs to develop leadership potential are essential. Universities should focus on building up programs that provide these skills rather than on building up their infrastructure.
- Need for transplanted education, transnational partnerships to provide quality education in Vietnam, including distance learning. Need for high quality administration, leaders who see the big picture and can push Vietnamese institutions to develop in the right way.
- Need for higher quality undergrad programs. Vietnam is well behind rest of region in this area.

Partnerships with universities

- American state universities are interested in establishing partnerships with private industry as well as with Vietnamese universities, but funding is a problem because state universities cannot invest funds abroad. Need for private foundations willing to fund projects in Vietnam to assist universities.
- Need to bring in trained American teachers to set up programs that will eventually result in Vietnamese run programs with American curriculum. A lot of work needs to be done between U.S. companies and universities to make this happen.
- One professor said it was inspiring to see Intel, Boeing, and other companies having such extensive education programs.
- Many companies are now in process of cooperating with public universities, especially in the area of English language education.
- A database of Vietnamese students in the U.S. showing what they are studying, when they will return on Vietnam, would help American companies find the educated people they need.
- Major resources for education must be private, not public. Example of Korea, in which 100 of Koreans graduate from secondary school and 80 percent go on to higher education. Mass education across society is largely private, funded by family and other private sources.

English language

- Good English communication skills are a must and finding staff with them is a big problem.
- Importance of Vietnamese Americans as a source of staff who speak Vietnamese.
- Example of Malaysian universities, which switched to English as the medium of instruction, which has made a big difference for companies seeking staff with good communication skills.
- Example of one tech company in HCMC that requires all employees to speak only English in the mornings.
- Example of JETT program in Japan, volunteers are recent American university graduates, who work in Japan in colleges and high schools outside the major cities. Focus is on English language conversation.

Session 2:
U.S. Government Sponsored Educational Programs

Moderator: Ken Fairfax, Consul General, U.S. Consulate
General, Ho Chi Minh City

Speakers:

*Thomas Vallely, Director, Fulbright Economics
Teaching Program (FETP)*

*Dr. Vo Van Toi, Executive Director, Vietnam Education
Foundation (VEF)*

*Dr. Tran Xuan Thao, Director, Fulbright Program in
Vietnam*

Ken Fairfax noted the long-term U.S. Government interest in having a strong and stable Vietnam. A strong educational system contributes to that goal, and this session is designed to let participants know what the U.S. Government is doing in education in Vietnam.

Tommy Vallely introduced the Fulbright Economics Teaching Program (FETP), which now has more than 1,000 graduates from all over Vietnam. He noted that:

- Current attention to higher education helped create Vietnamese Government Declaration # 4, which mandates GoV support for 1) improving governance of Vietnamese universities, and 2) general education and the liberal arts.
- Importance of strengthening the entire educational system, including technical schools, nursing schools, and all other components, including establishing a world-class university.
- Importance of developing partnerships and closer cooperation between existing institutions.

Dr. Vo Van Toi presented a detailed account of the Vietnam Education Foundation's (VEF) programs in Vietnam. He also introduced the following ideas:

- VEF courseware, which was developed through a partnership with MIT and which provides content for hundreds of specific courses, is open to everyone and can be accessed through the VEF website. These course outlines and materials can be downloaded and used in any university program.
- Possibility of recruiting students studying in the U.S. as summer interns in Vietnam.

Dr. Tran Xuan Thao provided an overview of the Fulbright program in Vietnam's four main components – the Vietnamese student and senior scholar programs that send Vietnamese to the U.S., and the American scholar and researcher programs that

bring Americans to Vietnam. More than 650 people have participated in the program since it was established in 1992. He also discussed the importance of the Program ensuring a fair, objective, and transparent selection process that can serve as a model for Vietnamese organizations.

Ideas that arose during the discussion in Session #2:

- Need to focus on education beyond that for the smartest and brightest. The rest of the population, which will form the bulk of the workforce, also needs education. Rural areas, in particular, have a desperate need for attention from American universities, who should “to find a way to help kids who need it the most.”
- FETP targets provinces; graduates and current classes reflect participants from many provinces, and graduates are encouraged to return to the provinces.
- One participant praised the Fulbright Program, which he said is “very cooperative and flexible” in designing programs to meet needs of universities.
- Problem of retaining staff was mentioned by many companies. One company trains staff overseas, only to find that they often get better offers and leave the company after they return.
- Need for programs for people with disabilities. What must happen to that those with disabilities can participate?

On-going Programs that can serve as models or best practices

- Consortium of 12 Vietnamese Community Colleges funds an MA program in TESOL in the U.S. Graduates return to teach at the community colleges.
- Example of FETP, created by a partnership between Harvard University and the National Economics University, which produces managers with the skills that American companies need.
- Vietnam Education Foundation organizes an annual Conference in the U.S. to help graduates line up a job in Vietnam before returning.
- Example of Ford Foundation’s International Fellowship Program, which provides pathways to higher education in seven universities for historically disadvantaged students.
- Villages that have focused on tutoring for the university exam have greatly increased pass rate. Example of villages in which first student passes university entrance exam – sudden widespread interest in taking exam as interest sparked among other students.

Ideas for new programs and improvements to existing ones:

- Need for teamwork and participation from the Vietnamese side and greater cross-cultural competency from the U.S. side.
- Need to motivate both teachers and learners.
- Need for higher pay for teachers, who currently are paid only 21,000 dong/hr. (\$1.30)
- Need to re-train high school teachers, especially English teachers, in interactive teaching techniques.
- In entering into partnerships between universities, many meetings are needed to develop trust between partners. Need to listen and ensure that university

programs focus on problems or subjects relevant to Vietnam. Need to engage to make relationships long term and mutually rewarding.

- Need to fix all aspects of a university; can't fix only one part.
- Private funding is a must. American universities have subsidies and endowments; Vietnamese universities also need them.
- Need for an Education Conference in the U.S. for American universities with programs in Vietnam.

Session 3: American Universities: Educational Programs in Vietnam

Moderator: Dr. Steve Maxner, Director, The Vietnam Center, Texas Tech University

Speakers:

Dr. Gil Latz, Vice Provost, Portland State University

Andrew Tran, California State University System

Dr. Tung Bui, Graduate Chair and Director, Ph.D. Program of International Management, Shidler College of Business, University of Hawaii

Steve Maxner described Texas Tech University's very active program in Vietnam, which includes 20 MOUs with Vietnamese colleges and universities.

Three biggest challenges:

- English proficiency of students
- Making sure TTU's program is the right fit for the partner university
- Financing is the most significant hurdle.

Solutions being considered:

- Requesting that MOET provide scholarships that would be used for research assistantships, in return for TTU offering in-state tuition.
- Linking Vietnamese students with specific professors who will act as advisors and mentors and help to arrange funding after initial scholarship runs out.
- For undergraduate study, MOET to provide sponsorships for 2 years, TTU to provide in-state tuition for last two years.
- Programs consisting of two years of study in Vietnam followed by final two years at TTU. Working with Vietnamese universities to set up curriculum for first two years to make transfer of credits possible.

Gil Latz, Portland State University, one of the most active American universities in Vietnam, presented the process through which PSU compares Vietnam's needs with the programs that PSU has to offer to ensure that its programs with Vietnamese universities are as relevant as possible for both universities.

Important points from Latz's presentation:

- Importance of vision – getting people into the same room to hold conversations so that all understand program goals.
- Leadership at the top, combined with leadership within the organization, is a must.
- Joint programs should build on unique strengths of each university.
- Importance for Vietnamese universities of partnering with academic institutions with a proven record for producing quality graduates.
- American universities need to be open to the financial and cultural challenges and opportunities of developing hybrid academic programs to meet national development goals identified by the Ministry of Education and Training.

Andrew Tran, California State University Chancellor's Office, noted that the CSU system has more than 11,526 students of Vietnamese origin, and that in the 2006-07 school year students of Vietnamese origin received 2,394 degrees. CSU undergraduate in-state tuition is only \$3,000 per year, and 70 percent of students in higher education in California are in community colleges, which is even cheaper.

Problems CSU faces in working with Vietnamese institutions:

- MOUs are signed, but often result in no real action by Vietnamese partners.
- A cooperative MBA program in HCMC ran for 1.5 years before running out of funds.
- Poor English language abilities of Vietnamese university administrators and faculty make discussions difficult.
- Vietnamese students are very smart, but need help to take advantage of opportunities to acquire a good education.

Successes:

- Collaborations between Hanoi University of Technology and CSU Chico, and between CSU Long Beach and the National Economics University, allows Vietnamese faculties to use CSU curriculum and textbooks.
- Linkage between the Hanoi Institute of Technology and San Jose State University, through which up to 50 units can be transferred from Vietnam to SJSU.
- CSU faculty visits on a limited basis to help with assessment and training.
- Vietnamese universities are sometimes willing to provide airfare, housing, and other local costs to bring TESOL trainers to Vietnam.
- CSU Fulbright scholars teaching in HCMC and Hanoi have strengthened relationships between universities.

Future plans:

- An agreement between 5-6 CSU campuses and universities to create a consortium on English teaching to facilitate two-way exchanges.
- Agreements are being worked out between American community colleges and industry educational partners to create customized training programs at community colleges in Vietnam to produce the skilled workers that American companies and the Vietnamese economy needs.

Tung Bui, University of Hawaii, first American university to establish education program in Vietnam, made the following points in his presentation:

- Importance of two-way flow of people, money, and ideas, and the creation of “mutual interdependencies” are necessary for a high quality bilateral relationship to exist. Managing flows of ideas, patents, publications, faculty, students, researchers, grants, is the key to a successful partnership.
- Successful U.S.-Vietnamese partnership can be a model for the rest of the world.

Challenges:

- A comprehensive funding strategy (including education institutions, governments, and companies) is essential so that projects don't die for lack of funding when half-completed.
- Until ‘education clients’ can pay for themselves, third-party funding is essential – it can be tough for a developing country to catch the globalization wave by itself.

Actions for the U.S. partner universities to take:

- Groom faculty with experience in education in Vietnam. Develop cross-cultural capacity.
- Localize teaching materials to be most useful for VN educational programs.
- Absorb high cost of linkages (salaries/per diem) as a “labor of love” - short term financial sustainability difficult but may pay off in long term.
- Resist temptation to cut costs at expense of quality.

Steps for Vietnamese partners to take:

- Develop programs for English language, communications, and teamwork skills.
- Improve quality so meaningful two-way communication can take place.
- Change from culture of knowledge absorption to knowledge creation.
- Ensure that education programs result in graduates with skills needed to find employment.

Solutions:

- Frequent trips to Vietnam will keep U.S. faculty engaged, and giving them time for their own research gives them an additional reason to make the trip.
- Example of Taipei, which sent tens of thousands of students to the U.S. 30 and 20 years ago, and now has a steady two-way flow of people, ideas, and funds.

Ideas and examples that arose during discussion in Session #3:

General ideas:

- In addition to financial problems, students heading to the U.S. score low on the GRE and GMAT verbal scores. Without such dramatic improvement, doors are shut even though students are very bright. Process is needed through which students can access study materials beginning in sophomore year.

- Vietnamese universities should develop “course equivalencies” to U.S. schools so that credits can easily be transferred between sophomore and junior years.
- Vietnamese universities are interested in adopting entire curriculum so that they can follow it in lockstep.
- It takes time to establish new programs and schools. Experience by one training company in HCMC that at first had to pay participants to attend training. Later it could give free lectures, and finally students will to pay to attend.
- Idea of extending 1 ½ year MA program to three years so that Vietnamese faculty enrolled in it could go back and forth to teach half of each year at their home university.
- Keep in mind urgency of situation; remain focused on needs of Vietnamese market, on workforce training needs.
- Problem with mastery of English exists, but real problem is pedagogical— learning to think in a way to meet demands of workplace in a changing world. Need to focus on teaching methodologies. U.S. is expert in this area; need to bring these techniques and ways of thinking to Vietnamese schools at all levels.
- Importance of remembering the Vietnamese, as well as the American, private sector.
- Vietnamese public (parents) think of U.S. as a place for technological and business excellence. Need to create more awareness of liberal arts before automatically enrolling students in MBA programs.
- Importance of ensuring that Vietnamese public has accurate information about American schools, and understands idea of accredited and non-accredited schools.
- University partnerships with private sector for quality and research as well as profit to reinvest in education.
- MIT/VEF Open Courseware provides great possibilities, but you have to know how to use it. Must know how to think in order to use it.
- Need to change incentive structure for teachers. They are paid only 21,000 per hour and only for time in class, so must teach many hours to make ends meet. No time available to learn new teaching techniques even if understand the value of them. Similarly, teachers are paid to lecture and grade one exam at the end of the year. They’re not paid to grade earlier exams or homework. From time to time they might assign these, but they don’t actually grade them because they have no incentive to do so.
- Changes needed to risk averse nature of Vietnamese educational system. If you make changes and things go wrong, or someone above you thinks it was a bad idea, then you’re in a huge amount of trouble. If things go right, you still don’t get enough credit to make the change worth the risk.
- Importance of Fulbright Program in creating links that lead to sustainable programs and give visiting scholars information they can bring back to Vietnam.
- Community colleges are cheaper than four-year colleges, and many students need only a two-year degree. They can help students acquire the vocabulary

and fluency students need to excel at four year universities. 56 percent of American students start at community colleges.

English language abilities:

- Malaysia has a marvelous program, working with the U.S. Midwest Consortium, in which four U.S. universities send faculty to teach first two years of undergrad courses completely in English. Students then transfer to the US for final two years. “Some of the best and brightest ... received their entire undergraduate education in English.” They were then ready to work in high tech countries immediately after graduation.
- “You have to bring English into education at an early grade and then continue it.” Technology is great but “you can’t learn conversation on line.” Contact with native speakers a must to develop conversational skills and confidence in use of language.
- Need to retrain Vietnamese high school English teachers.
- Students are motivated to learn English. We must create opportunities for them to study with good teachers, particularly native speakers.

Session 4: American NGOs: Education Programs in Vietnam

Moderator: Dr. Terance W. Bigalke, Director of Education,
East-West Center

Speakers:

Michael DiGregorio, Program Officer, Ford Foundation

*Phan Truc Quynh, Programme Associate for
Education, Atlantic Philanthropies*

*Al DeMatteis, General Director, Delta Construction
Management Company; & Chairman, DeMatteis Family
Charitable Foundation*

Moderator Dr. Terry Bigalke, East-West Center, provided information about the East-West Center’s research, seminars, and education activities. He invited Vietnamese educators to work with the EWC, and urged Vietnamese to participate in the EWC’s Asia Pacific Leadership Program and the International Fellowship Program.

Bigalke summarized major points expressed in earlier sessions:

- Need for systemic change through the educational system. Need for people who are able to think, who are educated for a world in which they will change careers several times.

- Need to ensure that Vietnamese educational programs provide the skills that are needed in the new Vietnamese economy.
- Need for leadership and creative thinking in an era when changes in careers are common.
- Issues of access (for the disabled and the disadvantaged).
- Need to expand the educational system without lowering the quality of education provided.
- Public funding of education in the U.S. has dropped from a high of around 70 percent down to about 15 percent. Need to seek private sources.
- Government funding for NGOs has similarly dropped from 80 percent to 15 percent. Private sources have arisen. Need for NGOs to assure quality education, to think regionally, and to provide vision and innovation.

He also mentioned the upcoming International Education Forum 2020 which will focus on:

- “Big issues” in education in the Asia-Pacific region.
- Paradigms in education in the region.
- Implications for privatization of education and reduced quality that can result.

Mike DiGregorio, Ford Foundation Representative, described how Ford’s International Fellowship Programs, which have totaled \$355 million over the past ten years, have helped Vietnam “develop its own solutions.” He also described the components of field-based Higher Education Programs, such as study tours, joint research and exchange of scholars.

DiGregorio had the following recommendations:

- More needs to be done to strengthen professional associations, which are weak, especially in the natural and social sciences.
- He concluded that it takes ten or more years to build up a program in a field of study.
- Challenges to sustainability include: pedagogy and the practice of studying only for the test; the university exam system, which reinforces knowledge of older faculty, which may be less relevant today; incentive structures that favor research over teaching; faculty hiring largely within institutions; lack of funding for intellectual resources and libraries, and inefficiently use of funds they do have; and the relative weakness of professional associations, which have limited capacity to inspire and carry out renovations.
- Professional associations are “the key” and have the benefits of dealing across institutes and ethical standards.
- The importance of having realistic time frames for expectations for educational changes to have the desired effects.
- Multiple changes must take place to reform a university department. Scholarships must be provided; students educated abroad must return and work in higher education; the career advancement ladder within universities has to be clear and transparent; universities should allow faculty to “buy out” of teaching time to engage in higher income consulting and accept research grants; departmental exit exams must be changed to that they do not

emphasize the older faculty's training but instead promote innovation by younger faculty; universities need to create assistantship and fellowship programs that can put graduate students into the teaching track; and faculty must invest more energy in creative learning approaches. Incentives must be provided so that these things will happen.

Phan Truc Quynh, Atlantic Philanthropies (AP), provided information on AP's activities in Vietnam to improve student-centered, problem-based learning and teaching, and to promote research in universities. She highlighted AP's "Information Access for Development Programs," which include opening Learning Resource Centers throughout Vietnam, and efforts to improve English language abilities through four Centers of Excellence.

Quynh also cited the following challenges and ideas:

- Old-fashioned teacher-centered teaching methods need to be replaced with student-centered learning methods.
- Learning Resource Centers needs to be used for effectively.
- Need to adopt new business practices, which is difficult because LRCs have limited budgets at universities.
- Need to develop programs in strategic management and international negotiating skills.

Al DeMatteis, Delta Construction and DeMatteis Family Foundation, cited the success of the Foundation's projects in training 150+ Vietnamese engineers, funding three vocational centers for street kids in Danang from which more than 1,000 kids have graduated and more than 98% have jobs, and having sponsored a neurologist to study at the Mayo Clinic.

DeMatteis's thoughts on educational reform include:

- Kids have to think on their own, not blindly follow procedures or rules. Knowing what to do is not merely a matter of doing A followed by B, then by C and D—sometimes it is more appropriate to go directly from A to D. Need for critical thinking and problem solving skills.
- Kids also need practical experience in high school and college.

Comments from the discussion in Session #4:

- Many teachers have foreign degrees and know what should be done, but must teach 10-12 sessions to make a living, so have no time for improving their skills or engaging in preparations for class. Can't solve problems by telling teachers how to teach better, but must reform incentive structure to give them opportunities to change teaching styles and give them time to do so.
- Need to reach young children – 5-6 years of age. "What is the difference between an American child and a Vietnamese child? The American has a library card."
- Young teachers looking for opportunities to further education, but need resources.

- Ford Foundation is supporting 27 libraries. Needs additional training for staff and programs to draw students into the libraries.
- Difficulty of changing ways of teaching and learning when students must prepare for one make or break exam at the end of the year.
- 80 percent of teachers in certain fields also work for private planning companies, as town planners, or have consulting contracts, and thus spend only 20 percent of their time teaching.
- Importance of continuous research, as info is outdated quickly. Constant knowledge creation is necessary.
- Change require “sustained support.” Change builds over time, and is not a one-shot, short-term undertaking.
- Institutional change and development is critical and requires a sustained effort. Universities that are aware of that will be most successful.
- Need to take a comparative approach – looking at what other countries in the region are doing and what has been successful there.

Session 5: Promoting Study in the United States

Moderator: Dr. Harry Norman, Dean, University Extended
Education, California State University, Fullerton

Speakers:

*Dr. Mark Ashwill, Vietnam Country Director, Institute
of International Education (IIE)*

*Tu Anh Vu, President, Vietnamese Student Association,
University of Hawaii*

Mark Harris, President and CEO, ELS Language Centers

Harry Norman, CSU Fullerton, noted that CSU Fullerton, the largest campus in the CSU system, with 37,000 students, has more than 350,000 people of Vietnamese origin living within commuting distance. The Vietnamese International Bridging Expo (VIBE) that it held in October, 2007, attracted more than 3,000 people interested in learning more about Vietnam. CSU Fullerton has been active in Vietnam since 1991.

Norman also presented the following observations:

- Problems exist with absorbing the large number of new Vietnamese students.
- Students who want to study in the U.S. need information to find the right schools.
- Difficulty students face in understanding the application process and the role of student agents in Vietnam.

- Importance of education for nontraditional, midcareer, students.

Mark Ashwill, Institute of International Education, Vietnam, presented information on the advising, outreach services, and testing services provided by IIE in Vietnam.

Ashwill also made the following points in his presentation:

- In addition to providing free educational counseling, IIE plans to expand into pre-academic cross-cultural training, career counseling, and leadership development.
- Students must be aware that not all U.S. schools are accredited, and most students should seek admission only at legitimate “regionally accredited schools.”
- Australian Education International survey found that most parents want their kids to study in the U.S. because of its reputation as providing the highest quality education.
- Student networks are important ways for possible students to find out more info. One example is “VietAbroad” a network website with about 10,000 members made up of students who are already in the U.S. or who want to go.
- IIE would like to develop a program modeled on IIE Cairo’s Student Leadership Discovery Program, which organizes in-country, semester-long extracurricular leadership training for students.
- IIE organizes an annual Higher Education Fair that brings representatives of more than 100 accredited U.S. universities and colleges to Vietnam, usually in October.

Ashwill also presented the following information about numbers of Vietnamese students at American universities and colleges:

- Number of Vietnamese students in the U.S. is up 380 percent since the 1998/99 academic year.
- Student visas issued was up 80 percent in 2007 over 2006.
- 2/3 of all Vietnamese students in the U.S. are self-financing.
- 22 percent are graduate students.
- 25 percent study at community colleges.
- 80 percent of Vietnamese students in the U.S. come from the southern part of Vietnam.

Statistics from IIE publication *Open Doors*:

Academic Year	Number of VN students at Am. univ. and colleges	Rate of Increase
2001-02	2,531	
2002-03	2,722	8%
2003-04	3,165	16%
2004-05	3,670	16%
2005-06	4,597	25%
2006-07	6,036	31%

Tu Anh Vu, President, Vietnamese Student Association, University of Hawaii, provided the Vietnamese students' perspective on the experience of applying to and studying at American universities. She also provided examples of specific ways that the Vietnamese Student Association of Hawaii helps students adjust to life and study in the United States provided models for other universities to follow.

Vu also identified the following obstacles and solutions:

Obstacles from the Vietnamese Student's Perspective:

- Educational system differences result in misunderstandings and confusion.
- Limited access to information is a problem, as students don't know where to look for accurate information.
- Students have limited experience with visa process and travel.
- Difficulty of understanding and meeting admission test requirements, which are often not presented in a comprehensive list.
- Cultural adjustments to life and study in the United States.
- Students in rural areas may not have credit cards which enable them to pay online tuition.

Solutions and Suggestions:

- The Vietnamese Student Association, Hawaii, provides information on its website and through one-on-one emails from students who are currently/have already studied abroad.
- Once students are in Hawaii, VSAH provides a network to help with cultural adjustments, organize cultural activities, and provide support in time of need.
- American universities should develop specific programs to meet needs of Vietnamese students, not just international students in general. Once they have those programs, they can market effectively to the Vietnamese population.
- Vietnamese students in country can be not only "helpmates" but can also be "the best recruiters" for new students.

Mark Harris, President and CEO, ELS Language Centers described ELS's efforts since 1984 to act as a "strategic partner to colleges and universities." ELS tries to "create a surrogate home" for international students studying in the U.S. ELS' English training program (6 hours a day in four month increments) is accepted in lieu of the TOEFL by more than 600 colleges and universities. ELS also is the largest operator of IELTS and TOEFL test centers in the United States.

Harris also provided the following challenges and solutions:

Challenges:

- Getting the word out to potential international students. "No matter how famous or successful your institution is, no matter whether you are public or private, chances are that abroad people have never heard of you."
- Agents may have good intentions but if they don't know what programs will be most effective, information will be misdirected.

Solutions and suggestions:

- American universities and colleges must have a searchable website in Vietnamese. (ELS hosts a gate site in 12 languages which will have basic information about the school.)
- No matter how much printed, online information you have, you need to get out into the field to make yourself known in Vietnam. You need to have “sweat equity.”
- Education fairs and local talks really do help by providing opportunities for representatives to present information on their schools.
- Support the people distributing your information and control the quality of that information.
- ELS has 13 trained agents in Vietnam, who have visited U.S. schools and been trained in the U.S.

**Session 6:
Visas: Tell Us How We Can Do Better**

Moderators: Ambassador Michael W. Michalak and Consul General Kenneth Fairfax

Speakers:

*Eric Alexander, Counselor for Consular Affairs,
U.S. Embassy, Hanoi*

*Rachel Mueller, Consular Officer, U.S. Consulate General,
Ho Chi Minh City*

Discussions focused on the requirements that Consular officers look for in applicants for student visas. Most important criteria are:

- Honesty from applicants in conversation with visa officers. Need to establish credibility with visa officer. Worst thing is to lose credibility.
- Applicants need to show they are serious students, and can do so by presenting specific information about the university they plan to attend, the program of study, and the dates of the study.
- Also very important is presentation of a plan showing the student’s goals after returning to Vietnam, and how study at this particular university and this particular program will help the applicant meet his/her goals after returning. “This is why I want to study in the U.S., I want to do X when I come back to Vietnam.” Students must show intent to return *at the time of the interview*. Consular officers know that people’s lives change, that they fall in love, get a good job offer, but they need to show at the time of the interview that they intend to return.

- Plan should show how education will be paid for. Money doesn't have to be in the bank at time of interview, but plan must show where funding will come from and demonstrate that it will be available over the course of the study.
- Applicants for student visas who have relatives in the U.S. can show how those relatives fit into their educational plans by providing housing or financing for the education. Relatives in the U.S. can be a positive factor if applicant shows how it supports his/her educational plan.
- Students whose relatives have petitioned for permanent residence for them can still qualify for a student visa. They need to show what is called "dual intent"—that they plan to return to Vietnam after their studies are completed and before their immigration petition is approved.
- In sum, in the visa interview, just be honest, and demonstrate serious intent. Know about your school, your plan. Consular officers have only three minutes per student, so students need to be able to express their plan quickly in an organized manner.
- Consular officers know that the experience can be intimidating. Feel free to "practice the interview with students. This is no problem--as long as they tell the truth.
- A lot of information on the visa process is available on the U.S. Embassy and Consulate General websites. www.Hanoi.usembassy.gov and www.hochiminh.usconsulate.gov

Additional points about visas and study in the U.S. made during the discussion in Session #6:

- 80 percent of Vietnamese students in the United States come from the southern part of Vietnam because the region is so big, as the Consular District stretches from around Hue to Ca Mau. In addition, there are historical and cultural reasons as well as economic reasons for this large percentage.
- In HCMC, most students are self-pay students, whereas the majority of government scholarships go to students from Hanoi.
- Number of students from Hanoi is growing. Consular Section is constantly doing outreach to students. Officers are ready to attend Education Fairs or other opportunities to talk to students and their parents.
- Issuance rate is higher than in the past, and going up every year because "the quality of students is increasing."
- Consular officers make the final decision. Ambassador and Consul Generals cannot interfere in the visa issuance process.
- Possibility of long-term entry-exit visas. "Nothing would make us happier" but the process works on reciprocity, so we have to mirror the Vietnamese system.
- Students do not need to be afraid that if they come home on their college vacation, they won't be able to get a visa to return. However, "if you're a long term student, your odds of getting a visa are close to 100%."
- U.S. regulations require that visas cannot be applied for more than four months in advance. Because of this regulation, students are sometimes reluctant to enter programs that require two years of study in Vietnam followed by two years in the United States. The more information about these

programs visa officers have, the better their decisions will be. Directors of these programs should acquaint visa officers with their programs, and students in those programs can alert visa officers in advance of their intention to apply for a visa at the conclusion of the Vietnamese portion of their program.

- VEF has not had any problem with getting visas for its 230 Fellows, and invites students to visit VEF or its website for information on the visa process.
- ELS students who have been pre-accepted by the university and have I-20s haven't had any problems in getting visas. However, students who want to study English in the U.S. and then switch to a university should be prepared to show a clear plan for gaining admission to a university. Every case is different.
- Students who go to the U.S. to study for the entire undergraduate program are mostly from public schools. Those who want to study two years in Vietnam and two years in the U.S. are evenly split between public and private schools.
- Funding of IIE, which provides student advising for the USG overseas is limited. IIE in Hanoi has 2-3 student advisors. By way of comparison, the British Councils in Malaysia and Indonesia have 100 advisors in each country. Ambassador Michalak noted that "The U.S. is a first world country with a third world budget. . . . We are having the Conference so that we can do more even though we don't have the budget."
- The U.S. recognizes that education is a lifelong process, and that adults might want to go to the U.S. for midlevel professional training. Short term training for policy makers and professionals should not be a problem.
- Australia not only welcomes international students, but also invites them to stay to work in Australia. There is not much chance that the U.S. will change its current policy, but one year of practical training after graduation is allowed.

Session 7: Public Sector-Private Sector Partnerships

Moderator: Ambassador Raymond Burghardt,
Former U.S. Ambassador to Vietnam;
Director, East-West Seminars, East-West Center

Speakers:
*Virginia Foote, President,
U.S.-Vietnam Trade Council, Education Forum*
*Professor Augustine Vinh, Administrator,
Executive MBA Program, Shidler College of Business,
University of Hawaii*

Moderator Raymond Burghardt and panelists provided examples of successful public-private partnerships in Vietnam and presented ideas for future partnerships that could improve support for education in Vietnam. Suggestions include:

- Greater private sector participation in government-funded study tours to the U.S.
- Increased dialogue between U.S. companies in Vietnam and Vietnamese universities to identify particular skills and training required by local staff.
- Greater coordination and engagement with U.S. state governments (citing example of Oklahoma, which is not the second largest recipient of Vietnamese students).
- Need to develop the ability to define issues, see obstacles, and analyze solutions.

Virginia Foote noted the need for ongoing, continuous programs to train Vietnamese government officials and companies. She also noted the important role that U.S. agencies like OPIC, the Ex-Im Bank and USTDA could play in increasing educational exchanges.

Professor Augustine Vinh described his nascent project to establish an American International University (AIU) – a non-profit education institution in Vietnam with the collaboration of U.S. universities, Vietnamese companies, and U.S. companies operating here. AIU would serve as a “shopping mall” of education opportunities for local students and employers, and will offer a viable gateway into Vietnam for interested foreign universities without requiring them to establish their own “bricks and mortar” institution. This project is a spectacular example of how initiative, networking, and a lot of hard work can result in an extraordinary achievement.

In the ensuing discussion, conference participants described their roles in ongoing public-private partnerships in Vietnam and other countries in the region.

- The key to success in joint projects is taking time to carefully design and tailor the program to local conditions.
- One company cited its robust university partnership program with top universities. Program provides hands on labs, university teacher awards for those who help design textbooks, learn what end user companies need, and create products that correspond to that need.
- Importance of a student loan program. Need to explore this idea further with private banks and the Government of Vietnam.
- Education financing could significantly increase educational exchanges between the U.S. and Vietnam, especially if U.S. Agencies such as OPIC, the Ex-Im Bank and the U.S. Trade and Development Agency (USTDA) backing up or guarantee loans. More study is needed.
- Opportunity for U.S. businesses to build their brand name by “getting credit for their good deeds” in education in Vietnam. Working with Vietnamese leaders to understand and support their priorities can ensure that American companies direct their resources to areas of greatest need and thus receive maximum credit for their programs.

- Importance of two-year Associate Degrees for industries such as aeronautics and garments. For many industries, this program would meet the educational requirements for many jobs, and would be better for employers from a cost and time standpoint.
- Availability of short term study programs, such as those at the East-West Center, for young leaders, journalists, and women.
- USAID and the U.S. Foreign Commercial Service (FCS) provided ongoing, continuous education programs to train Vietnamese government officials and staff of individual companies in support of Vietnam's bid to join the WTO.
- Companies need specific skills and can set up own training programs for staff.
- One large American company, with 200,000 employees in Vietnam, has set up a high school program for all employees. 1,500 have already received diplomas.
- State of Oklahoma and universities in that state have long term involvement with Vietnamese companies in the petroleum industry. One result is that Oklahoma is now being the 2nd largest recipient state of Vietnamese students.
- Need for student loans for Vietnamese students. Two-thirds of students are funded by family, not by scholarships. Loans are necessary for those who can't be completely self-funded. 1,300 Vietnamese students in the U.S. received scholarships.
- Need for practical training programs to help Vietnamese who can't find jobs because the training they received in school was not adequate or appropriate.
- Vietnam needs to move quickly to prepare students for opportunities that already exist. Companies in one industry came in a few years ago, but left because workers didn't have necessary skills.
- Companies examine three objectives for organizing training programs: 1) They help to make the company's products better or cheaper; 2) They develop the company's brand in Vietnam, develop supply chain or other support activities; and 3) Because it is the right thing to do. Programs must meet the first two criteria as well as the third.
- Companies should see that the Vietnamese leadership is proposing. Need it to buy in to ensure that company is spending education funds effectively.
- Example of joint leather project that several universities and companies participated in, along with the Department of Agriculture. Grown from a small company to one with annual revenues of \$100 million in business.
- Need to identify what we can do now vs. long term fundamental reforms needed
- Mustn't leave out the Vietnamese private sector – there has been a lot of talk about U.S. private sector and VN government only.
- Importance of work study programs to give students experience during summer. But problem of students not prepared to serve as interns.
- Difficulty of Viet Kieu in buying a house in Vietnam or coming back to teach in Vietnam. Vietnam needs to set clear transparent policies to encourage Vietnamese-American professors to return.
- AA degrees needed in production management, garment textile production. Industry has 2.5 million workers, but needs skilled workers.

- Concern about new foreign companies entering Vietnam, which will deplete the already tight supply of skilled workers.

Session 8: Conclusion and Wrap-Up

Moderators: Ambassador Michael W. Michalak
Ken Fairfax, Consul General, U.S. Consulate General, HCMC

Ambassador Michalak opened the final Session by noting how the Conference enabled stakeholders from different types of American organizations – companies, universities and colleges, NGOs, and USG programs – to share information and exchange ideas. He then described some of the actions needed to carry forward the momentum generated at the Conference:

- Preparation of a Conference Report that will capture and disseminate the ideas that arose during the Conference.
- Consultations between American stakeholders to ensure that U.S.-Vietnamese programs at Vietnamese universities provide students with the skills most relevant for Vietnam’s modernizing economy. These skills include not only technical skills, but also the thinking skills needed to recognize and analyze problem and the leadership skills needed to seize opportunities.
- Discussions by Ambassador Michalak with the Government of Vietnam to move the dialogue on education forward. With the Conference Report in hand, Ambassador Michalak will then be able to report to the Vietnamese leadership about what American organizations are doing in Vietnam and get their ideas on what we can do better and what else would be suitable for American organizations to do.
- Presentation of ideas generated at this Conference about how to reform the Vietnamese educational system to Vietnamese leaders. Ideas include the need to change teaching styles to encourage creative thinking and problem solving skills, match educational programs with the needs of the Vietnamese economy, and create a Special Education Zone.
- Action by the U.S. Mission with various Ministries will help ensure quicker customs clearance of textbooks, a more transparent and streamlined visa and work permit process for American professors, the registration of educational institutions as educational institutions rather than businesses.
- Efforts to improve Vietnamese English language skills: All stakeholders are more aware that poor English language abilities are a widespread problem, and many ideas have arisen during the Conference in how to improve them.
- Consultations to set up future Conferences., perhaps a Conference for American and Vietnamese university representatives, to be held in HCMC, in October, at the time of the IIE Higher University Fair.

- Creation of more private sector-public sector partnerships. Both the Vietnam Education Foundation and the Fulbright Program can both accept donations to expand their programs.

Ken Fairfax summarized some of the major points that arose in earlier sessions:

- Need to create an environment supportive of using new teaching methodologies. The issue is not just knowing what ought to be taught or done, but creating an environment supportive of actually doing it.
- Importance of feedback from companies to universities so that the right skills are taught.
- Importance of liberal arts in developing analytic abilities, creative thinking, problem solving skills.
- Need to listen to universities. Look for win-win situations such as 2+2 programs, work together to meet goals of both universities.
- Importance of English language training in many ways – for companies, for universities, for individuals.
- Set up web-based report on what everybody is doing so that information can be added, have option for easy submission of information and updates.
- Social work programs exist at many universities in Vietnam, but not great quality of program or teachers.
- GRE training program – open the door for more Vietnamese educational leaders to go to the U.S. Open our door for students by making information needed to pass the GRE more readily available. Prepare a CD Rom with materials needed to prepare for the GRE.

Nguyen Hung Ngoc, Deputy Director General, International Relations Department, Ministry of Education and Training (MOET) made the following observations about education in Vietnam and described MOET's thinking and plans:

- Vietnam has an open door. Many professors have gone to the U.S. to look at curriculums, teaching styles, libraries.
- Many interesting ideas and suggestions have come out of the Conference.
- To change from the Confucian master-pupil style of teaching to the learner-centered approach will be difficult, and requires new knowledge and experience. To help the process along, MOET has a program to train 10,000 PH.D.s overseas.
- Need to send more students overseas. VEF and Fulbright are a good start, but need to send even more.
- One worker trained abroad working in a Vietnamese office cannot change things. But five or more in the same office can help shape change.
- In the future, we need to work on the selection of students to increase research capacity and teaching capacity.
- We need to ensure that students return from study abroad. 500 students who received medals are now overseas—they have not returned after their studies were completed—which is not helping Vietnam.

Projects MOET has in the pipeline:

- English language program – ten year program to make country competitive. Implementing training from primary school onward. Recognition that those with good English skills can command a good salary overseas as well as in Vietnam.
- In HCMC, 80 percent of students have eight hours of English instruction every week now. But need real teachers who can teach English communication.
- The GoV has asked all colleges and universities to use English as the medium of instruction. 220 programs are now taught all in English.
- Viet Kieu have many initiatives. Need to see how best to bring them to Vietnam to work with teachers and students. Vietnamese schools can provide accommodations.
- MOET will work to have GRE given in Vietnam.
- Vietnam is working to change teaching styles, set up links with digital libraries, improve quality of libraries in colleges and universities, improve English programs, and requests assistance in all of these areas.

Other ideas voiced at Session #8:

- Importance of training programs in specific areas. One training program has trained 600-700 banking professionals over the past eight years.
- Those being trained must appreciate the value and cost of the training they are receiving or they won't be serious about taking advantage of the training.
- Vietnamese partners should tell American universities what other partners they have been working with on the same project. American universities need this information up front if they are to develop realistic plans.
- Need for library training programs in Vietnam. Simmons College has trained 55 librarians in the U.S., who are now in research institutions in Vietnam. Next step is for international library degrees to be offered in Vietnam, perhaps in cooperation with U.S. schools, who can provide course software, help faculty, and provide access to databases and how to use them.
- Need for an accreditation agency in Vietnam to give objective picture of quality of various programs at various Vietnamese universities and to identify actions needed to address weaknesses at each.
- Need greater attention paid to high school level education so that students graduate with useful skills or knowledge and qualities needed for university study.
- Vietnam will find its own way, and will catch up in future years. Vietnamese desire to help their country, and we should be optimistic about the future.

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