

VietHope Newsletter

Spring Issue XII

May 2008

VietHope is a non-profit organization dedicated to Vietnam's socioeconomic development. We at VietHope believe that the wealth of Vietnam lies in its human capital and its prosperity depends on whether we harness this human capital. As such, we believe that good education is indispensable to Vietnam's growth and its future.

We are a volunteer-based organization with 20 active team members. VietHope members are based in Boston, San Francisco, New York, Michigan, Baltimore, Washington DC and Southeast Asia.

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WORD FROM THE BOARD

By Nam Tran Nguyen

In February 2008, VietHope held its 7th annual retreat in Washington D.C., hosted by long-time VietHope member and co-founder, Hansel Pham and his wife Thu Nguyen. The retreat drew members from across the country, including California, Michigan, Massachusetts, New York and Virginia. The VietHope team in Vietnam participated via conference call, which enabled teams in both the U.S. and Vietnam to share ideas and goals for 2008, as well as re-connect as friends and VietHope volunteers.

The two day event began with a two hour tennis session to get the blood running. Besides tennis in 40 degree weather, VietHope members enjoyed a wonderful potluck dinner to celebrate the success of the past year and celebrate personal milestones. Recently, long-time VietHope member Uyen Huynh became engaged to Carsten Tam. Ngan Dam, program manager for the Community Scholarship Program, is preparing for her move to France later this fall to be with her fiancé Josef.



VietHopers enjoying a potluck at the Washington D.C. Annual Retreat, February 2008

In addition to the personal celebrations, the team also gathered to discuss the past year, as well as its future. Key successes in 2007 include:

- Continued project expansions, helping over 1,000 students to date:
 - University Scholarship (USP) = 226 awards
 - Merit Scholarship (Merit) = 150 awards
 - Community Scholarship (CSP) = 356 students
- Implemented the Grant Initiative Program, awarding funding to 4 projects
- Improved program execution, including integration of team Vietnam and team U.S., online databases, and protocols
- Implemented the monitoring and evaluation for USP; results from this have helped VietHope to better understand the impact of USP and how to improve it going forward

In 2008, VietHope intends to continue to build from its 2007 achievements. VietHope will continue to improve its programs and expand its reach to deserving students, as well as implement monitoring and evaluation components to all programs. Furthermore, VietHope will continue to push for cross-country team integration with a focus on building leadership team in Vietnam.

One of VietHope's key challenges in 2008 will be expanding its fundraising reach and platform. Over the past years, our supporters have been extremely generous in their financial backing of our programs. As VietHope reaches a greater number of deserving students, we will need the ongoing support from our current donors, as well as reaching out to new ones. If you have any ideas to help spread the VietHope word and reach, please contact me directly at nam-tran@viethope.org. The VietHope team is excited for 2008!

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Scholarship

Programs:

- Merit Scholarship Program: Provide access to education for poor students in rural areas, from grades 6-12 (\$120/student/year). Merit is a renewal scholarship program whereby scholarships are renewed on a yearly basis until students finish grade 12, or fail to meet VietHope criteria.
- University Scholarship Program (USP): Provide access to education for disadvantaged students at the university level (\$150/student/year). USP aims to develop a network of university students and potential community leaders. Summer activities are organized for USP scholars to engage in community service activities.
- Community Scholarship Program: Provide monetary support for uniforms and school supplies for the least well-off students in Vietnam.

Infrastructure

Investment Program:

Provide access to education by funding construction projects for schools, libraries and learning centers.

UNIVERSITY SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM (USP) By Oanh Nguyen

I am very delighted to report that the USP team, consisting of members in Viet Nam and the U.S., has successfully finished another scholarship cycle. VietHope received 472 high quality applications this year. After a careful selection process, a group of finalists were chosen for the interview round – a new feature of the program this year. Our volunteers in Viet Nam did a phenomenal job of interviewing over 250 students in one week to select 226 deserving scholarship recipients. The interview round was a success this year as all the volunteers unanimously agreed that the information gathered at the interviews were crucial in making sure that our scholarships were awarded to students most in need. After pilot testing this year's cycle, the team agreed that the compressed time line to accommodate the interviews was worth the effort. Thus, the interview round will be a permanent feature of the program in the future.

I am very happy to see that the expansion in Hue resulted in many successful scholarship applications. We added three new universities to the program and were able to triple the number of applications received from this region. The quality of applications from Hue also improved tremendously, resulting in very high success rates at these three universities: 41-79%. I am extremely pleased with these results and very grateful to the team of volunteers in Hue, without whom these results would not have been possible.

We were able to invite all students to the award ceremonies in all three regions. Can Tho and An Giang universities were once again very generous in providing transportation to the scholarship recipients to travel to Ho Chi Minh City to attend the award ceremony there. It helped to make the award ceremony more fun and create more networking opportunities for students. To the right are some of the photos from the award ceremonies.

With the help of the Monitoring and Evaluation committee, we were able to evaluate USP to see if we selected the right students who had high academic potential and had the greatest financial need. On the following page is a profile snapshot of this year's recipients. Over two thirds of our recipients were the first generation to attend university. Over 50% of our recipients did remarkably well on the university entrance exam

(scores of 20+ points) and in high school (GPA of 7.0+).



Student participation during the USP award ceremony in Ho Chi Minh City, January 2008



USP award ceremony in Hue, January 2008

I am also happy to welcome Dan White and Quang Duong as the new leaders of the USP. Both Dan and Quang have extensive experience living and working in Viet Nam and are well-versed in working with university students. Dan taught English for 2 years at the Can Tho Universities as a Princeton-in-Asia fellow. While there, he also started a youth program at an orphanage that not only helped orphans to learn to use computers and English but also provided employment opportunities to university students. It was this program that brought him to VietHope. Quang is a student from Viet Nam who received his bachelors degree from Harvard and is currently in a PhD program in Computer Science at University of Michigan. Quang's connection with the USP started two years ago when he held a meeting with the USP recipients to discuss study abroad opportunities. He was heavily involved in this

Ways to Support

VietHope: VietHope welcomes anyone who believes in our mission. There are a number of ways in which you can support VietHope:

- Sponsor a student through one of VietHope's 3 Scholarship Programs
- Donate to VietHope's infrastructure investment program
- Spread awareness about VietHope and VietHope's mission
- Donate time and energy by becoming a VietHope volunteer

year's scholarship cycle and was interested in running the program. With their combined expertise, Dan and Quang will introduce much innovation to take the USP to the next level of efficiency and impact. Since taking over the leadership roles in March, Dan and Quang have hit the ground running with the renewal of the bimonthly English Speaking Club to give students a chance to practice and improve their English. The program has been very well-received among the students. It is our hope that this program will be the first step toward building a network of leaders among the scholarship recipients.

A LETTER FROM A MERIT SCHOLAR STUDENT

Lam San, June 18th, 2007

Dear Sponsor,

This past school year 2006 - 2007, I was selected into the Scholarship program and was awarded the scholarship by Mr. Thanh Phong. However, I still have not written any letter to send you my regards. I am therefore writing this letter in order to ask for your information as well as to express the sincere thanks from me and my family.

Firstly, I wish all of you good health and happiness. During the last school year, I tried my best to study, to respond to the hope of my parents, my friends and the Organization. I am the fifth child in the family and my mother passed away nine years ago. It is only my father who has looked after five children, with lots of hardship. Therefore I promise to myself that I must study well so as to deserve his love for me, and also to help relieve the burdens on his shoulders. I would like to thank all of you once again and wish you good health and happiness. I should have written to you long ago, but I have been helping my family in farming. I feel very sorry for that.

I wish you all the best!

Sincerely yours,
Phan Duc Trieu

VIETHOPE VOICES: COST OF EDUCATION IN VIETNAM

By Quang Duong

Viethope's University Scholarship Program (USP) has achieved substantial success in reaching out and providing financial assistance to under privileged students in Viet Nam to attend college. Aided by great generosity from a wide network of donors, USP has been able to award around 200-300 students per year with a scholarship of \$150 each. However, the fast-rising cost of education in Viet Nam has raised some concerns among USP's staff to sustain our scholarship program's mission, and thus received a considerable amount of attention from Viethope's members in general. According to the "International Herald Tribune," Viet Nam's inflation index rose to 15% in the month of February, 2008, the highest in more than a decade¹. Investigating these figures more closely, we observe that food and gas, the two factors that constitute the largest portion of the cost to attend college in Viet Nam, increased by 25.2% and 12% respectively². Last year, inflation sat at over 12%, according to Thanh Nien newspaper. In addition, the ministry of education announced that it has to raise tuition, as reported in a Tuoi Tre newspaper's article³. This increase will be around 10% this year or even over 100% in the next few years.

In order to obtain a more comprehensive view of the rising cost of college education, we have conducted a student survey and independent research by our staff on the present tuition fee in schools where USP recipients attend. Two out of 12 schools (26 recipients) charge over 3 million VND per year for tuition (or approximately \$200 USD), while four (39 recipients) are maintaining their tuition around 2.5 million VND/ year. The rest keep their fees at the base level of 1.8 million VND/year, which is expected to increase as previously mentioned.

This news has been worrying us as one USP scholarship can now and will barely cover one student's tuition, and has prompted VietHope to assess, adjust, and redefine our scholarship program amidst turbulent and unstable economic conditions in both Viet Nam and America. We plan to finalize USP's plan to address these concerns by the Fall of 2008, when a new USP cycle starts.

Thanks to Dan White, Minh-Phuong Dang, My-Anh Ha, Dang Vu, and Oanh Nguyen for their valuable contributions.

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VietHope events and activities:

- May newsletter release and update
- Team Vietnam retreat in Hue to discuss strategy and operations in Vietnam (June 2008)
- VietHope participation in [Union of North American Vietnamese Student Associations](#) (UNAVSA) conference and grant (July 2008)

Please visit www.viethope.org for more details on upcoming events and activities

- ¹[\[http://www.iht.com/articles/ap/2008/02/28/business/AS-FIN-ECO-Vietnam-Inflation.php\]](http://www.iht.com/articles/ap/2008/02/28/business/AS-FIN-ECO-Vietnam-Inflation.php)
²[\[http://www.thanhniennews.com/features/?catid=10&newsid=35250\]](http://www.thanhniennews.com/features/?catid=10&newsid=35250)
³[\[http://www.tuoiitre.com.vn/Tianyon/Index.aspx?ArticleID=238044&ChannelID=13\]](http://www.tuoiitre.com.vn/Tianyon/Index.aspx?ArticleID=238044&ChannelID=13)

University	Annual Tuition	USP Coverage of Tuition (%)	Avg. Annual Materials Cost*	USP Coverage of Tuition & Materials
Can Tho	2,400,000	101	625,000	80
An Giang	1,800,000	134	625,000	100
Bach Khoa HN	2,080,000	116	625,000	89
Khoa Hoc HN	2,400,000	101	625,000	80
Ngoai Ngu HN	3,000,000	81	625,000	67
Nong Nghiep HN	1,800,000	134	625,000	100
Khoa Hoc Hue	1,800,000	134	625,000	100
Nong Lam Hue	1,800,000	134	625,000	100
Bach Khoa SG	3,200,000	75	625,000	63
Khoa Hoc SG	2,500,000	97	625,000	77
Nhan Van SG	2,500,000	97	625,000	77
Y Duc SG	1,800,000	134	625,000	100

* From M & E Survey which has wide range

(1,600,000 VND equivalent to \$100 USD)

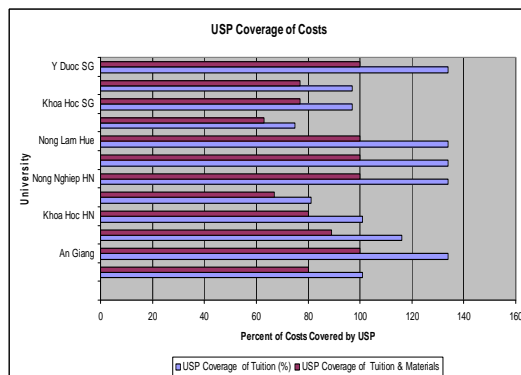
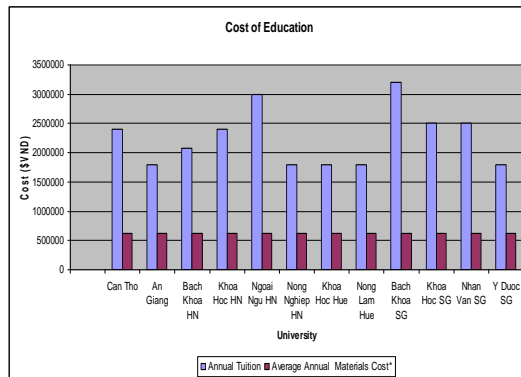
VSAS SPREAD THE WORD ABOUT OUR WORK

By Alan Tu

Over the past year, many more people are learning about VietHope because of the great Vietnamese American youth. Through Vietnamese Student Associations (VSAs) at the University of California San Francisco, Drake University, University of Pennsylvania, and others, we have reached close to 3000 people. From events such as Vietnamese culture shows, dances, and ultimate frisbee, VSAs have created a lot of enthusiasm about VietHope's work.

Aside from VSAs in the United States, the University of Western in Canada has also supported VietHope through their annual culture show. Their support and performance has been extremely motivating for our team. You can see their performance at http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=B33_iPsRCn4.

In 2008 we look to continue building more awareness of VietHope by working with more VSAs. If you are a member of a VSA or know of one that we can work with, please contact Alan Tu at alan@viethope.org.



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VietHope Executive Committee:

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*Monitoring & Evaluation
Co-Chair*

Tai Phan,
Director of Communications

Tiffany Phan,
*Co-Head of Community
Scholarship Program*

EVENTS AND FUNDRAISING UPDATE

JOHNS HOPKINS SPRING TONIC EVENT

By Lynn Huynh

Thank you to the Johns Hopkins Student Assembly and Pho #1 for supporting VietHope's mission. On February 29, 2008, VietHope participated in the Hopkins Spring Tonic event. This is an annual event where 300 students and faculty members come together to enjoy faculty and student performances. VietHope received food donations from Pho #1 to sell at the event. The Hopkins Spring Tonic was a huge success and best of all, VietHope raised \$450. Thank you to Audrey Chu, Vivian Towe, Hsien Seow, and Chau Nguyen for all their help in making it possible for VietHope to help students in Vietnam receive an education.



Johns Hopkins Spring Tonic Event, February 2008

Special *thanks* to our corporate donors:



VietHope
for a prosperous Vietnam tomorrow

Donation Form

(Online donations accepted via www.viethope.org)

The objective of VietHope's Scholarship & University programs is to provide financial assistance to children in poor rural areas in Vietnam who cannot afford the costs of continuing their education. The students are selected on the basis of financial need, performance in school, and their motivation to excel. Your contribution will directly support the education costs for these children.

Name: _____

Address: _____

Email: _____

Please check one or several of the boxes:

- I wish to sponsor a child through VietHope's Merit Scholarship Program. With my support of \$120/year, I will help children in Vietnam attain a higher level of education
- I wish to make a contribution of \$_____ towards the University Scholarship Program (\$150 per student)
- I wish to support and become more involved in VietHope's work by becoming a member for \$25
- I wish to make a general donation to VietHope in the amount of \$_____

*Please make checks payable to:

VietHope, Inc.
423 Brookline Avenue, #199
Boston, MA 02215