

*"Perhaps the greatest power of such intellectual exchange is to convert nations into peoples and to translate ideologies into human aspirations"*  
-- J. William Fulbright

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## From the Director

Welcome to the Spring 2019 edition of the Chào Fulbright!

We kicked off the new year with the launch of the Vietnamese Student Program AY2020 with hundreds of participants taking part in information sessions across the country. In this edition, we continue to introduce our group of current U.S. grantees in Vietnam: U.S. scholars

who started their Fulbright journey in January, and English Teaching Assistants (ETAs) who may be winding down their time in Vietnam but are not slowing down! Besides their busy teaching schedules and activities to promote U.S. culture, ETAs also attended the first ever ETA Fulbright regional workshop in Taipei hosted by Fulbright Taiwan. Also, in this newsletter you will find a story on reconciliation

from our U.S. scholar, a monthly blog by a Vietnamese Teaching Assistant in the U.S., and more! Many thanks to all of you for your wonderful stories and photos. As always, please send us your feedback, comments, stories, and photos so that we can make this newsletter even better.

Happy reading!  
The Fulbright Vietnam Team

## "Fulbright in East Asia and Pacific" Workshop



The Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs, with the support from Fulbright Commission in Taiwan, hosted an enrichment workshop "Fulbright in East Asia and Pacific" for 150 ETAs and 40 students and scholars from East Asia Pacific (EAP) countries, including Vietnam, on March 9-12 in Taiwan. This workshop provided a unique opportunity for grantees to share experiences of working, conducting research, teaching and living in different countries across the EAP region. In addition, the workshop was a great chance for ETA program administrators from the region to gather and share lessons and best practices.

## Vietnamese Student Program Calls for Applications AY2020-2021

Early January, Fulbright Vietnam announced the application cycle for the Fulbright Vietnamese Student Program. Successful applicants will pursue graduate study in the U.S. in the fall semester of AY2020-2021.

The deadline for submitting applications is **April 25, 2019**.



Fulbright staff have visited numerous cities and provinces to hold info sessions and promote the Program, including Hanoi, Ho Chi Minh City, Can Tho, and Thai Nguyen. Finalists from AY 2019-2020 also joined to share their experiences in preparing for the applications and interviews. Participants were inspired by the true stories of ordinary people who made it through the Fulbright Selection process.

## U.S. Scholars and Students to Vietnam - Spring Semester

**Isaac Woods** is trying to bring access to mental health services to every child in the world! After receiving his PhD in School Psychology from the University of Memphis in 2017 and completing a postdoctoral fellowship at Harvard Medical School/ Boston Children's Hospital Neighborhood Partnerships he is now in Hanoi as part of his ASEAN Fulbright Scholar grant. His research project is titled Building Collaborative Relationships Between Schools and Communities: Comprehensive Psychological Services in Two Countries. The purpose of his project is to discover ways to help foster partnerships between schools, families, and medical centers/clinics to coordinate services for children. The Center for Information Research Service in Psychology at Vietnam National University and Institute of Mental Health in Singapore are serving as his host.

During his undergraduate training at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro, he served in various roles working with children. He recognized the transformative impact that education can have on families and witnessed the intersection of various economic, social, psychological, and environmental variables that prevented children



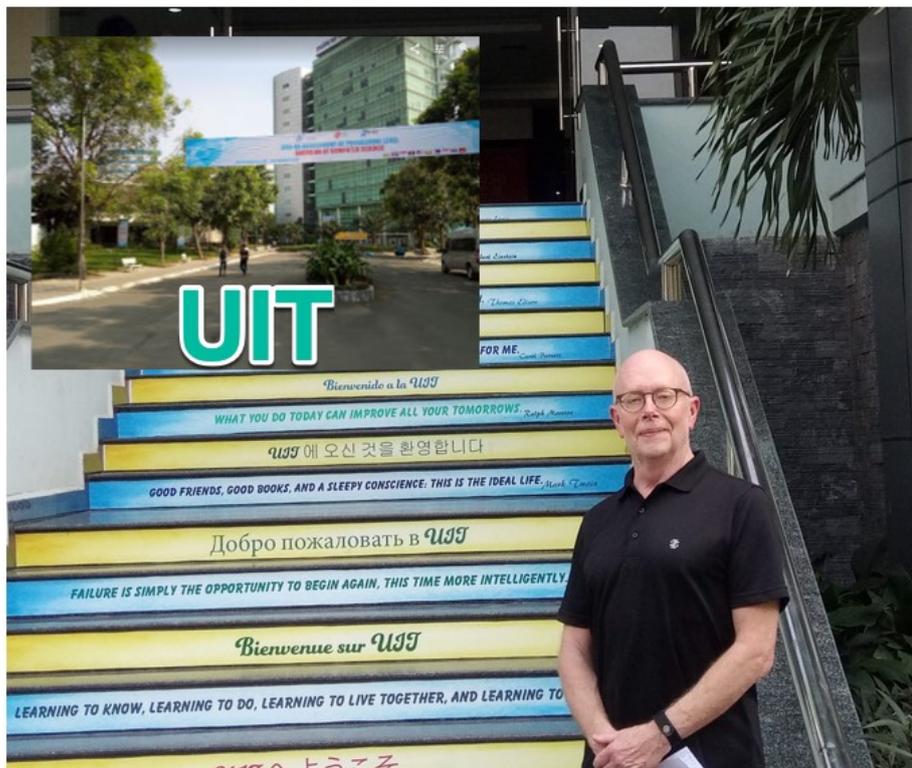
from reaching their potential. His global interest in improving access to services was evident early in his doctoral training. His connection to Southeast Asia developed from his previous graduate courses dedicated to social justice issues in mental health counseling. Prior to his pre-doctoral internship at Dallas Independent School District he was awarded a study abroad experience

in Southeast Asia to understand cultural influences on mental health services, conceptualization of trauma, gender issues, schooling experiences, and refugee aid. This study abroad experience strengthened his desire to return to the region and contribute to the implementation of psychological services in the school setting.

Isaac has enjoyed his time in Vietnam and appreciates the various cultural experiences that has been offered to him. He has been on a talk show as a panel member for the Vietnam Mental Health Literacy Network, learned how to make Trung Cake, and attended his university's End of Year Gala. He is truly grateful to be awarded the Fulbright Scholar grant so early in his career and hopes to build career-lasting partnerships with his host institutions. For more about Isaac, you can find him somewhere on a plastic stool eating *phở* gà.

**Prof. John F. Hurdle** is a self-confessed science nerd. In Vietnam he discovered a like-minded community at the University of Information Technology (VNU) in Ho Chi Minh City. Imagine: an *entire* campus devoted to technology studies. It proved a perfect fit. John lectures on health informatics (i.e., the intersection of healthcare and computer science) and natural language processing (i.e., trying to program computers to make sense of human texts). He trained in medicine at the University of Colorado after completing a Bachelor's degree in chemistry. While in medical school he fell under the sway of a new faculty member with a freshly minted MD-PhD in the then-nascent field of Medical Information Science (now called Biomedical Informatics). John interleaved his remaining years of medical training with an MS program in Computer Science at Columbia University (the geography made sense at the time -- his wife, Colleen McDannell, was working on her PhD in Philadelphia). After working as what we could today call a Chief Medical Information Officer (CMIO) at The Graduate Hospital in Philadelphia, he and Colleen decamped to Heidelberg, Germany (then





West Germany). They both worked for the European Division of the University of Maryland till 1989. That year Colleen was awarded an endowed professorship in History at the University of Utah. This gave John the opportunity to complete his PhD studies in Computer Science.

During his graduate work in the early 1990s, John was captivated by neural network theory. It ended up being the focus of his dissertation. But software and computer hardware was simply too slow to "do" much in the real-world with neural networks. That has all changed. Computers grew steadily faster, memory grew steadily cheaper, and by the late 2000s neural networks and other forms of machine learning were finally practical. That lured John away from his work at the Salt Lake City Veteran's Administration Medical Center where he had been working as a clinical informatics researcher. He joined the faculty of the Department of Biomedical Informatics (BMI) at the University of Utah in 2006. The BMI program at Utah is the oldest, and one of the largest, graduate informatics programs on the planet. John was awarded tenure in 2009 and was promoted to Professor in 2016. Although John's research and training programs at the BMI are diverse, he returned

again and again to machine learning and natural language processing.

**Sue Ann S. Lee, PhD**, CCC-SLP, is an associate professor in the Department of Speech-Language-Hearing Sciences at Texas Tech University Health Sciences Center, Lubbock, TX, USA. As a certified speech-language pathologist (SLP) in the U.S., Dr. Lee is specialized in pediatric speech sound disorders, focusing on bilingual children and children with hearing loss and cleft palate. Her recent research and clinical interest lies in the treatment efficacy of speech-language intervention using advanced clinical instruments such as telepractice and ultrasound. Dr. Lee's research work has been published in a number of peer-reviewed journals and presented in

numerous professional conferences in the world.

As a Fulbright scholar, Dr. Lee is working closely with speech-language pathology practitioners at Hue University of Medicine and Pharmacy to provide supervisions and consultations on implementation of pediatric assessment and treatment at the Speech Pathology Clinic. Also, Dr. Lee will teach practitioners of various disciplines assessment and intervention of pediatric speech-language pathology in conjunction with the speech pathology training program supported by the KOICA (Korea International Cooperation Agency) during her stay. In addition, she will give a number of guest lectures/seminars to faculty and students at the various universities across Vietnam. Her lectures/seminars will not only deal with clinical topics related to speech pathology but also address cross-linguistic characteristics of English and Vietnamese sound system and pedagogy of English pronunciations.

During her visit, Dr. Lee will also conduct a research study with her Vietnamese collaborator, professor Ha Chan Nhan, Chair, Department of Rehabilitation at Hue University of Medicine and Pharmacy and his research team members. In this project, we will investigate how young Vietnamese chil-



dren develop speech sounds to establish speech milestones. This work will make a significant impact on future speech pathology practice and research in Vietnam.

## English Teaching Assistants AY2018-2019

**Sophia Rosales** majored in History and minored in Asian Studies and Anthropology-Geography at Cal Poly in San Luis Obispo, California. She teaches at Lao Cai Community College in Lao Cai province. During these past few months, Sophia has



come eager to learn Vietnamese and connect with her students, teachers, and her community. Her interests include "reading, running, and taking down the patriarchy."

"Hello! My name is **Megan Johnson** and I am a Fulbright ETA in the lovely city of Lang Son, Vietnam. I have the absolute joy of teaching college students at Lang Son's College of Education. I graduated from Gustavus Adolphus College in St. Peter, Minnesota with a double major in English and history with a double minor in Japanese studies and comparative literature. I am incredibly grateful to have the opportunity to exchange cultural values and traditions with my students, fellow staff members, and the community I now call home."

**Caroline Beadles** is a Fulbright ETA at Vinh Phuc Gifted High School in Vinh Yen, Vinh Phuc. She graduated in May 2018 from the University of Georgia studying International Affairs. She aims to inspire intellectual curiosity and critical thinking. She also hopes to foster social connectivity by jumpstarting

programs such as the school's very first girl's soccer team.



Greetings from Bac Giang province! My name is **Tiana Castillo**, and I am so grateful for this opportunity to teach at Bac Giang Gifted High School this school year. I recently graduated in May of 2018 from the University of Tennessee, with a degree in Communication Studies and Religion. Thus far, growing in friendship with fellow teachers and students has been my favorite part of teaching, as well as encouraging my students to show bravery, creativity, and joy in the classroom. My passion is to work with international students in transition, and will hopefully pursue this passion following my grant. Em yêu Việt Nam!



**Rebekah Chung** is currently teaching at Hoa Binh College of Education in Hoa Binh, Vietnam. She is enjoying working with a wide range of students, from 1st grade to college-aged. Having studied elementary education, she hopes to continue teaching English as an ESL educator in the U.S. and other parts of the world.



**Mackenzie Doherty** is an English Teaching Assistant at Nam Dinh Teacher Training College. She works primarily with one group of freshmen on their speaking and listening skills and helps to coordinate English club events and celebrations. Mackenzie was born and raised in Worcester, MA and majored in creative writing at Hamilton College in Clinton, NY. As she begins the second half of her grant, she wants to focus more on learning Vietnamese and starting up a fitness club for students and faculty. Most people call her Mac. She loves chè so so much.



**Andrew Keough** is an ETA at Quang Binh University in Dong Hoi city, located along the north central coast of Vietnam. He is a graduate of the University of Pittsburgh (B.A., History, 2011) and New York University (M.A., Program in International Relations, 2018). He was previously a VSFS intern for the U.S. Embassy in Hanoi's Environmental, Science, Technology, and Health Unit. This year, he is overjoyed at the opportunity to become closer to the members of his community both inside and outside the university.



**Madison Bingle** is a Fulbright ETA at the Danang University of Economics. She is a recent graduate of Coker College, where she majored in History & Sociology. Prior to her Fulbright experience, Madison spent a semester studying and volunteering with organizations in Danang, Vietnam. Following her grant, she plans to attend law school to pursue a career in human rights law. As a Fulbright Fellow, she is most excited about the opportunity to take part in the exchanging of language and culture between the peoples of Vietnam and the United States.



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**Raevan Guindolina**

is an ETA in Dong Thap Province, teaching at Dong Thap Community College. She graduated from Northeastern University in Boston, MA with a B.S. in Criminal Justice and Human Services (May 2017). She is interested in ways in which individuals, families and communities can equip young people with the skills to become leaders in their careers and communities.



**Danielle McColgan**

is a proud graduate of Smith College, where she completed her B.A. in History in May 2014. Following graduation, she gained experience in higher education through as an Admissions Officer at New York University, and as a Mellon Mays Program Associate at the Woodrow Wilson National Fellowship Foundation. Danielle is thrilled to be spending this academic year as a Fulbright ETA at Quang Nam University located in Tam Ky, Vietnam. She is eager to continue working with her students on improving their English language skills, and hopes to further immerse herself into the local community in Tam Ky.



**Chelsea Maupin** is a 2018 graduate of Purdue University with a degree in Horticulture: Sustainable Food and Farming Systems and a minor in International Studies in Agriculture. Her grant is at Le Quy Don High School for Gifted Students in



Phan Rang-Thap Cham, Ninh Thuan Province. She's loving getting to know the students, has started a garden with some student volunteers, and continues to explore the country through food, farms,

and occasional swing dancing. She plans to pursue graduate school in international agriculture development following the grant.

**Sophie Gardephe**

graduated from Bates College in May of 2018 with a double major in English and Politics. She is currently thoroughly enjoying teaching college students at Nha Trang National College of Pedagogy and kindergarten students at the associated Kindergarten near campus. She has really enjoyed working with the English Club and singing with the music department at the College. This next semester she plans to become more engaged in the wider Nha Trang community, improve her Vietnamese speaking ability, and try her hand at cooking some new Vietnamese dishes.



**David Thai**

graduated from the University of Pennsylvania in 2018 with a BA in Health and Societies and a concentration in Healthcare Markets and Finance through the Wharton School. He currently teaches at Hoang Le Kha High School for the Gifted in Tay Ninh Province. As an ETA, he is excited to immerse himself with the broader Vietnamese community, foster meaningful relationships with his students, and connect deeper with his Vietnamese heritage and identity. David is looking forward to taking advantage of this unique opportunity to grow alongside his students and community members.



**Athena Nguyen**

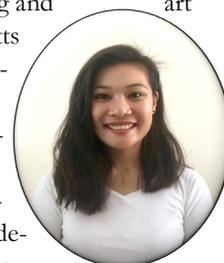
is serving as an ETA at Long An High School for the Gifted in Long An Province. She is a recent graduate from Santa Clara University with degrees in Public Health and Political Science and a minor in Biology.



She is ecstatic to leverage her Vietnamese-American identity and passion for social justice to enable and impact her community members and cohort fellows. She will pursue her Master of Public Health degree this coming fall.

**Chau Ngo**

majoring in education with a background in painting and art history at Massachusetts College of Art and Design. She was a teaching fellow at Manchester Breakthrough Collaborative and a teacher at Boston Arts Academy. Currently, she is an ETA at Huynh Man Dat Gifted High School in Rach Gia City, Vietnam. As a Vietnamese American and an ETA, her goals are to engage in cultural exchange, develop relationships and create community through art making, and better understand her family's history. Her interests include art, art history, music, traveling, and reading.



**Trini Bui**

is a graduate of the University of Notre Dame, where she earned a B.A. in English ('16) and an M.Ed ('18). She is an ETA at the Thua Thien-Hue College of Education in Hue, Vietnam. Over these past few months, Trini has become part of her community of students, colleagues, and the city of Hue through trips to various coffee shops, bun bo Hue stalls, and landmarks throughout the city.



**Norman Archer** is a graduate of the University of North Carolina, where he studied public health and anthropology. He currently teaches at Hung

Vuong High School for the Gifted in Viet Tri, Phu Tho Province. Norman is excited to continue to learn from his students and hopes to leverage his privilege to foster a creative and inclusive environment in the classroom.



## “Neither profound nor eloquent; but, it was heartfelt”

Xin chào! Tôi tên là Paul. When I was asked to share my feelings on the topic of reconciliation in this edition of the *Chào Fulbright Quarterly Newsletter*, I initially hesitated; publicly sharing personal thoughts is not something I am inclined to do. However, when I remembered the Fulbright program was created as a gesture of reconciliation at the end of World War II, the request seemed appropriate, so I agreed. Given this piece is written from my perspective, let me begin with a personal story.



Early in the morning on Monday, August 27, 2018, I arrived at the U.S. Embassy Consular Section, located at the Rose Garden Tower building in Hanoi, for a prearranged appointment. After passing through security, I walked into the Consulate lobby where I saw a small, unassuming table tucked against the back wall. On one side stood a U.S. flag, on the other, a U.S. Embassy flag. Setting on top of the bare table was a book that appeared to be a registration book. Assuming I needed to register my arrival and departure time with the Consulate, I approached the table. Beside the book, I found two unadorned ballpoint pens and a sheet of standard white copy paper. Printed in plain text on the paper were two sentences imparting the following: a) Arizona Senator John Sidney McCain had succumbed to brain cancer and passed away on Saturday, August 25, 2018 and b) for those wishing to leave a note of condolence to the family, the book would be available for the next 48 hours, after which time it would be sent by diplomatic courier to the United States and handed directly Mrs. McCain. This was how I learned that America, and more personally, my generation, had lost one of its iconic war heroes. As I stood in that empty lobby in Hanoi, staring at this piece of paper, I realized I would be the first person to write in this book, there was a strong possibility that

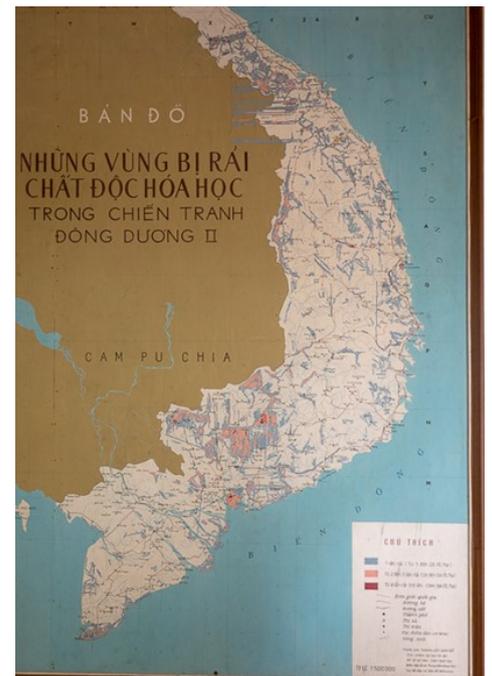
everyone after me was going to read what I wrote, and I had absolutely no idea what I was going to say. In the end, what I wrote was neither profound nor eloquent; but, it was heartfelt. Because the content is intended for Mrs. McCain and her family, I won't share it here. After writing my condolence, it struck me in the most profound way that 51 years prior, only 3.5 kilometers (2.1 miles) from the U.S. Embassy where I was now standing, Navy Lieutenant John McCain spent 65 months in Hoa Lo prison, a.k.a. “the Hanoi Hilton.” Lieutenant McCain's Skyhawk dive bomber crashed in Truc Bach lake in downtown Hanoi, on October 26, 1967, after being hit by a surface-to-air missile during his 23<sup>rd</sup> bombing mission over Hanoi.

The noun “reconciliation” is used when two governments work together to normalize relations and establish diplomatic relations. It is also used when individuals try to find a way to forgive each other after a war. At the global level, it is said by many that John McCain, the senator, played a central role in the U.S. – Vietnam relationship. It is also said, John McCain, the war hero, was the embodiment of reconciliation at the personal level.

Reconciliation, however, is not an event, it is an ongoing process. Furthermore, reconciliation is not easy. Perhaps this is best exemplified in a *Stars and Stripes* article written by Wyatt Olson on February 10, 2013. In this online article, written 40 years after the release of American prisoners of war from Hoa Lo prison, Senator McCain is quoted as saying: “I have great respect and affection for the Vietnamese people, but there are individuals who are still around Hanoi that I would, umm, look forward to seeing again on a level playing field. It wasn't so much for what they did to me but what they did to some of my fellow prisoners who did not return with us.”

Located 15.1 kilometers (9.38 miles) due west of Hoa Lo prison, in Van Canh commune, Hoai Duc district, Ha Tay province, sits a remarkable, yet unassuming, place of reconciliation called the Vietnam Friendship Village Project USA (VFVP USA <http://www.vietnamfriendship.org/wordpress/about/project-background>). From their website: conceived “...in 1988 by George

Mizo, an American Vietnam veteran, and subsequently created in collaboration with Vietnamese and French veterans who shared his desire for peace and reconciliation”, its mission is “to cultivate reconciliation and heal the wounds of the Vietnam War by uniting veterans and caring citizens through international cooperation in the building and support of the Village of Friendship, a living symbol of peace.” With the generous financial donations from veterans and individuals from Vietnam, the USA, Canada, France, Germany, and Japan, the VFVP USA sits on a sizeable piece of land donated by the Vietnamese government. The VFVP USA provides free medical and mental health services to ~40 inpatient Vietnamese war veterans who live in on-site dormitories for up to three months at a time. In addition, the VFVP USA provides educational and voca-



tional training services to 120 children, grandchildren, great grandchildren, and now great-great grandchildren of Vietnamese war veterans. These children live in on-site dormitories for up to five years and the vast majority have congenital malformations and severe cognitive deficits thought to be related to dioxin (Agent Orange) exposure. I made my first visit to this extraordinary place on August 17, 2018, exactly 21 days after putting shoes down on Vietnamese



soil. During this visit, I spoke with the Project Director (a North Vietnamese war veteran), entered classrooms, interacted with children, talked with dedicated teachers, visited dormitories, and walked about the beautiful campus grounds. Most poignant, however, was a lengthy conversation I had concerning a large, color-coded map of south Vietnam hanging in the compound library. This map tracked verified dioxin exposure locations of every North Vietnamese veteran or child treated at the VFVP USA since March 18, 1998, when the first six veterans and nine children arrived. It was during this conversation I realized that reconciliation is also an ongoing process between the people of north and south Vietnam. The Vietnamese I have spoken with about the war that occurred between 1955-1975 all say you must look forward; you must move on. However, moving on, like reconciliation, is complicated.

It does not matter if you, a family member, or someone you know was a part of the U.S. involvement in Vietnam between 1955-1975. It also does not matter if you were not yet born during that time. Like Arizona Senator John McCain, in our own way, *all* of us Fulbrighters posted to Vietnam – past, present, or future – are reconcilers playing our part in the reconciliation efforts between the United States and Vietnam. In the words of J. William Fulbright, our founding father: “Perhaps the greatest power of such intellectual exchange is to convert nations into peoples and to translate ideologies into human aspirations”.

Epilogue. I returned to the lobby at the end of my appointment. Where once an inconspicuous table had set back against the far wall, it now sat prominently in its rightful place in the center of the room; fully adorned with all the accoutrements befitting a person of Senator John Sidney McCain’s status. Where I had once stood alone in the lobby with my thoughts, there was now a growing line of “foreigners” and Vietnamese waiting to share their thoughts. John Sidney McCain was many things to many people – husband, father, brother, son, Navy Lieutenant, war veteran, prisoner of war, hero, enemy, U.S. Senator, American citizen, reconciler...human being. I believe John McCain would have made a great Fulbrighter.

## Fulbright Scholar Nguyễn Việt Long at Kansas State University

If there was a chance to talk about the most interesting experience of my life time, I will tell about the time that I participated in the Fulbright Vietnamese Scholar Program at Kansas State University from May to November 2017.



Participating in this Program was a golden chance for me to gain some achievements contributing to the development of my career. Firstly, I joined in the KSUCrops research group led by Dr. Ignacio Ciampitti with approximately 30 researchers from all over the world. KSUCrops is working on crop physiology, the utilization of high technology applications such as satellite images, unmanned aircraft and the big data processing in the corn production management

at the U.S. corn belt region. After the first three months working in that group, I published a scientific article in the prestigious journal “*Frontiers in Plant Science*” which is the world’s highest citation rate journal in the field of plant science. I had chances to present the research results at two U.S. universities: Notre Dame University and Indiana State; and the U.S. Crop Science Annual Meeting at Tampa Florida.

When the program was completed, I had continued to apply for grants to take full advantage of the U.S. modern imaging technology in corn production to apply in Vietnam. It is expected that this project will be funded in 2019. According to this project, we will establish and develop the Vietnamese satellite imagery research team in corn yield prediction and production management in the close collaboration with KSUCrops. At the same time, two research teams have been discussing and developing a “big” project proposal to study the effects of climate changes on the quality of agricultural products. We are sending this proposal to apply for research funding.

For all scholars including me, the Fulbright program helps us to pursue our passion for international academic and cultural exchanges. This program doesn’t only bridge the culture and education between the United States and the host country, but also it bridges all nations. It is special that Fulbright program also takes interest of the contribution of the scholars to their home country upon return. Actually, as an Executive Office of the International Cooperation Office of Vietnam National University of Agriculture (VNUA), I have been facilitating MoU signing between VNUA and three U.S. Universities, that I have visited during my Fulbright grant in the U.S. including Kansas State University, Kansas University and Emporia State University. In addition, I also had the opportunities to visit and discuss collaboration with two other universities, including the Florida University and the Morningside College in Iowa State. After signing the MoU, the Directors of the International Cooperation Program of the Emporia State University and the Kansas State University had visited to VNUA to establish the training and student exchange programs. Through these visits, the bridges among professors, researchers and students of Vietnam and U.S. universities are strengthened. It’s truly that these collaborations are contributing to the relationship between two countries.

Taking part in the Fulbright program has been one of major highlights in my academic and professional development because this program has brought to me many benefits that I could not imagine at first. I sincerely thank Fulbright Program for giving me the precious opportunity to enrich my knowledge and broaden my horizon. I strongly encourage my colleagues and friends to apply to this program.

## Rewarding months in the U.S. as an FLTA

### “Any difficulties so far, my sister?”

*Sometimes when I wake up, I get that question from my brother back home. And I realize one exact thing that my supervisor here tells me “If you only look at difficulties, difficulties will come but if you look at bright sides, positive things will be here in front of you”. Challenges will happen because Michigan is a new land and I meet people not just from this state but from all other continents in the world. Instead of calling anything “an obstacle” in understanding languages, cultural habits and etiquettes, it should be me asking myself first if I have enough “adaptation”, “willingness” to learn new things and “tolerance” in a new land. And I always remind myself to be mindful of today, of this moment that I’m lucky to be here at MSU. I’m truly blessed to learn and grow up professionally and mentally, even physically.”*

With that spirit, Quynh has tried to be the fullest version of herself in all aspects of life. Maintaining a monthly blog is not just a way to reflect her experiences, keep memories, but also to inspire herself and others. Fulbright Office is proud to introduce the highlights of her monthly blog. If you’re interested in the full text of her blog entries, please visit [https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1apO\\_2gKjiHGIPQNGM51CnhbjiiBAUOER](https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1apO_2gKjiHGIPQNGM51CnhbjiiBAUOER)



### AUGUST - The first start of a Fulbright FLTA

It has been one month since the time I was here at Michigan State University. (MSU). One month has inspired me to embark on an amazing journey that, many of my professors here say, only FLTAs have: Being a teacher – Being a student and most of all – Being a cultural ambassador for our country (at the same time).

I feel “home.” MSU is truly a new home for me.



### SEPTEMBER: The conversation started from the War...

“Quynh, before meeting you as the first Vietnamese friend, the only thing I know about Vietnam is the war. Then after meeting you, I know peace and smiles”. What my American friend told me truly touched my heart.

#### My first class: Vietnamese is “Phở”

Teaching Vietnamese here is also different from that in Vietnam because almost all students here have never been in Vietnam. (The first lesson quiz revealed that the only right answer my students knew about Vietnam was “Phở”) They were all so curious and excited to learn about Vietnamese cultures and traditions. Seeing our cultures in each language lesson was one of the most beautiful things I truly appreciated when teaching Vietnamese.



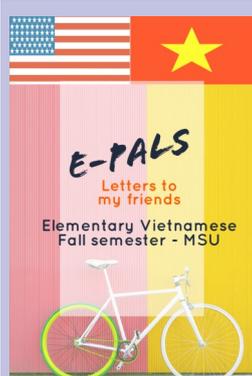
### OCTOBER: “Fall” in love with beauty and inspiration

October was a beautiful and inspiring month. I have seen the beauty of America in more aspects than the “Fall”: Beauty of Nature, Beauty of people, Three beautiful and Inspirational stories, Beautiful and Uplifting activities

#### American and Vietnamese cultural exchange in my classes

This was a beautiful day when I organized a zoom meeting for my American students to meet my Vietnamese students back home. 75% of the time was for practicing Vietnamese and 25% was for sharing about cultural differences between Vietnam and America. They all had great time to not only understand more about the language but also Vietnamese cultures. I was so touched to receive an email right after the meeting from my American student.





**NOVEMBER: Snow showed up... and we're speeding up!**

The first snow arrived at MSU in the beginning of November. I was warned that winter would be extremely cold in MSU and I was half-excited, half worried to see that first snow.

***My class activities to connect with Vietnamese cultures.***

It was coming to the end of the semester and I challenged my students to use more technology in the class to support their learning such as Adobe Spark, Edpuzzle, Storybird,... This time they also started with E-pals, a modern version of Pen-pals. Each American student is connected with one student from Vietnam to write letters to each other, half in English, half in Vietnamese. It was so wonderful that they understood more about each other's cultures, languages and they found new friends. Some of them wrote that they promised to call and visit each other.

**DECEMBER: Mid-year Conference; Winter Break**



I could not believe that we reached the end of the semester. Now we are on half of the journey already. For me, this is a reminder that I need to treasure the rest of my time here to learn, to contribute and to enjoy. Saying goodbye to students and classmates, to my yoga and Zumba friends, to beloved faces in dining halls, I headed to Washington D.C. for a five-day conference.

It was an once-in-a-lifetime opportunity for nearly 400 FLTAs teaching many languages to meet and become friends. We had an enriching experience to look back what we have done and gain tips/advice from FLTA alumni and experienced professors about teaching techniques and strategies to plan the best semester ahead.



**JANUARY: When Snow Storm hits Michigan!**

This was the first time in history Michigan State University had to close for 2 days due to inclement weather. This was also the first time in my life that I could feel the freezing coldness under my feet through a thick pair of boots and 2 layers of socks. Our supervisor was really worried for us and gave us detailed advice to survive this weather. I was so touched receiving messages from my American friends "Are you Ok there?", "Do you wear right clothes" or sometimes even cute messages "Hey, are you still alive?" – "Yes, I am still alive!" Everything was indeed so lively, beautiful and exciting that I didn't want to miss a single day to enjoy and live to the fullest.

**FEBRUARY – My first Lunar New Year away from home**

February was full of beautiful memories and unforgettable moments. It was Tet holiday – the biggest holiday of the year and I was not in Vietnam. I had a wonderful experience for this Tet with beloved Vietnamese friends here at Michigan State University. My friend, Faiza from Pakistan also joined the party, enjoyed Vietnamese games and learnt about the tradition of giving "Lucky Money".

Regarding classes, Teaching this month was full of fun. More V-talks between American and Vietnamese students were set up. They had chances to practice language skills and share about differences between American and Vietnamese families, relationships and their views towards making decisions in life. Students from both countries learnt a lot from each other.



*Photos and blog entries by Quy Nguyen, Fulbright FLTA at Michigan State University.*



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