

Loyola University Chicago in Vietnam

Since the summer of 2007 when a group of Loyola administrators accepted an invitation from the Deputy Prime Minister of Vietnam to visit the country, colleagues at Loyola have been busy with a variety of projects in Vietnam with local partners in the educational sector.

Vietnam is among the fastest growing economies in the world and has a population of over 88 million, 26% of which are under the age of 15. Not surprisingly, Loyola has oriented educational projects and programs towards the development of this youthful country.

Loyola's activities in Vietnam include leadership training, English language learning, service learning, study abroad and will soon include business and nursing related programming.

In 2008 Loyola's first program in Vietnam was a four week training workshop for English language faculty at Hanoi Medical University in response to the common request we heard that in medical schools everyone learns and needs English but few actually speak the language well enough for conversation or for research. The success of this workshop brought about the opportunity for Loyola's English Language Learning Program (ELLP, part of OIP) to offer in summer 2010 a five week immersion for English Language teachers from Pham Ngoc Medical University of Ho Chi Minh City. During their stay at Loyola this group of teachers worked on perfecting their own language skills and on the development of new pedagogical techniques. More workshops are in the planning stages. New housing opportunities at Loyola will enable ELLP to work with groups on a regular basis.

University leaders throughout Vietnam expressed their concern about the weak management skills of leaders in Vietnamese institutions of Higher Education. In response to this, Loyola organized a 10 day workshop for presidents of 10 Vietnamese Universities. The workshop began in Ho Chi Minh City and continued in Chicago in October 2009. Loyola called upon the skills of several of our vice presidents and deans to give interactive presentations to the group on topics as diverse as financial planning and performance assessment in American Universities. In the afternoons, the Vietnamese presidents participated in problem solving sessions around topics of their own choosing. Loyola's President offered a well received session on strategic planning. The success of this program has led Loyola to explore a second set of workshops and particularly a workshop for presidents of Vietnamese medical universities.

Providing opportunities for Loyola students and faculty to visit and better understand Vietnam has also been a central focus of our strategy. The university has sponsored two faculty immersions to Vietnam in 2007 and 2010 and is planning a third for the summer of 2011. OIP will assist faculty in establishing and realizing a set of relevant goals for and subsequent to their travel to Vietnam.

A small group of Loyola students participated in a study abroad and service learning program in the summer of 2009 at one of the campuses of Vietnam National University in HCMC. This group of pioneering students led the way for the creation of a full semester long study abroad program in Ho Chi Minh City. Located at the University for Social Sciences and Humanities in HCMC, this program will launch in January 2011. The first group of students is currently finalizing their course choices for the Spring semester.

Loyola is in an earlier stage of planning with regard to business and nursing education. In the course of 2011 the university hopes to offer a conference for business leaders in HCMC and then develop customized business or executive education programs for delivery in the HCMC area. In nursing, a faculty immersion with participants from NSON and SSOM explored programming options in June 2010. As a result of that trip SSON is working on a BSN to MSN program option in conjunction with local university partners. Loyola seeks to develop nursing related activities with a view towards supporting the development of community and public health in Vietnam.

Ultimately, Loyola would like to develop academic programming for Vietnamese university students. This set of projects will take time. For now, the creation of a small set of viable programs, greater understanding of Vietnam, its many cultures and people, and the creation of close and lasting partnerships with Vietnamese colleagues is a substantial agenda. With the experience gained in these activities, the university will better situate itself to decide on additional programming suited to the local population and reflective of Loyola's mission and character.