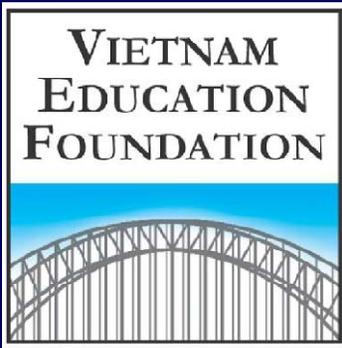


# **Graduate Programs in U.S. Universities Applications and Admissions: Process and Procedures**

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VEF Country Director

**CONGRATULATIONS!**



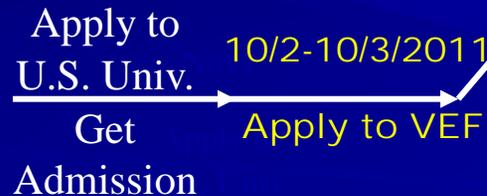
# Where are You in the VEF Fellowship Program Process?

YOU ARE HERE!

## Process A



## Process B



# Application Action Plan



# YOUR GOAL UNTIL APR 2011

- To get admission, with financial aid, into top U.S. graduate programs that accept VEF financial terms.
  - 5 universities recommended by US professors
  - Other universities of your choice

# Prepare to Apply

- Study the schools
  - Visit schools' Web sites
  - Visit professors' homepages
  - Learn about their current research
- Prepare your applications tailored specifically for them
- Know application timelines -> submit application timely



# What does the School and Professors Expect from Graduate Students?

During your degree program, you are expected to:

- **Carry out research**

*Requires you to be:* intelligent, creative, motivated, proactive, able to work with others

- **Publish papers**

*Requires:* communication skills, being well organized

- **Assist with teaching**

*Requires:* communication skills (esp. spoken English)

- \* **HARD WORKING**

After your degree program, you are expected to:

- **Have a successful career**

# Application Documents

- **Application form**
- **Statement of purpose (SOP)**
  - Be author of your own, start early, contact SOP reviewer early
- **Letters of recommendation (LOR)**
- **Supporting documents**
  - Educational documents
    - Certified transcripts: translated, Vietnam's grading system (available from IIE)
    - University diplomas
  - Evidence of financial resources (VEF letter of financial support)
  - Evidence of English proficiency (TOEFL & GRE) (sent by ETS)
  - Awards and merits (certified translation)
  - Curriculum vitae
  - Explanation of your Vietnamese name

# Application Form

– IMPORTANT to state that

- For nominees: “I am a nominee for a VEF Fellowship and I am seeking supplementary financial support from the school if the VEF Fellowship grant does not meet all the costs at the university” (sometimes the VEF grant does meet all costs in cheaper schools”
- For recommendees: “I am a recommendee without funding from the VEF Fellowship Program, and I am seeking full financial support from the school.”

– check (✓) boxes asking if you are requesting financial support\* from the university.

# Letters of Recommendation (LOR)

- LORs are very important:
    - Confirm your qualifications
    - Provide additional information about you (vs. application, CV, and scores).
  - A good LOR should be **reasonable, specific, & personalized**
    - **Reasonable**: recommender knows you well and has the qualifications to evaluate you.
    - **Specific** : cites examples, provides specific information, and tells little stories about the student.
      - Example: What was your rank in class? What is the outcome of a project you have done? How do you relate to others?
    - **Personalized** LORs : gives insight into what kind of person you are and believes in your potential.
- ⇒ **Contents of LOR should match SOP** (research experience, work experience)
- Personal Statement: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6zo6NI4wHf4&NR=1>
  - <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mjGI2e4GG9E&feature=related>

# What Makes an Application Stand out?

- High test scores (TOEFL, GRE, GRE Subject test) only get you into the short list
- To be selected, you have to make your application stand out
  - SOP, LORs, CV (background & research experience, GPA, awards, honors, extracurricular activities, leadership, publications, and skills)
- Schools/professors read these to **get a whole image of you**

# Curriculum Vitae

- Spend time writing and rewriting your CV
- Make it short (1-2 pages) and sharp
- Most notable:
  - GPA
  - Class rank
  - Awards/honors
  - Research experience
  - Publications
  - Special talents/skills

**Key: Your CV should indicate that you are an outstanding student**

# What U.S. Universities you Should Apply?

- Five recommended U.S. universities
- Others of your choice:
  - school ranking from <http://www.usnews.com/sections/rankings/index.html>, or
  - rankings of Ph.D. programs at <http://www.phds.org/rankings>.
- Also consider
  - Schools that have already had successful VEF Fellows and/ or Vietnamese students.
- **Google search:** Key words of research interest, fields of study, professor names, schools

# Application Timelines

- Application seasons: late September to mid-December
  - Difference from university to university, from discipline to discipline
  - Univ. conduct weekly reviews of complete applications.
- Encouraged to apply early
- Admission decision: December 15 to early March.
- Deadline to inform VEF: April 1

# Contact Universities & Professors in the U.S.

- Make sure your application is complete
- Review status online
- Contact admissions office by e-mail--the quickest and easiest way to get answers.
- Send a personalized email to the professor
  - Email subject
  - Do homework, study & think, make it short but sharp.
  - Personalized letter gets more attention.
    - Indicate that you visited professor's homepage and find a good match.
  - Don't send exactly the same letter to every professor.
  - Might attach your CV with the letter.
- Be persistent and proactive

# Conclusions

To be a successful applicant to top U.S. graduate schools:

- Prepare well the application docs (SOP, LORs, CV, scores, diploma, merits and award)- research, extra, leadership
- Submit applications timely
- Follow up & report admissions to VEF.
  - Work **diligently** and **patiently**.
  - Be confident and motivated
  - Do homework: study and think! Be specific, Create an image that stands out
  - Be proactive and persistent

# Kien Pham's Formula for Success

3 “Ch”s

- Chuẩn bị
- Chăm chỉ
- Chủ động

**CHIẾN THẮNG**

**Thank you  
&  
GOOD LUCK!**



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