

Vietnam Education Foundation Fellows & Scholars

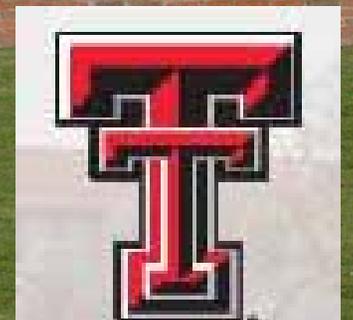
Pre-Departure Orientation

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Studying and Training in the U.S.

Nguyễn Thị Thanh Phượng, Ph.D.
Country Director
Vietnam Education Foundation



Presentation Outline

- Ph.D. program milestones
- Personal experiences
 - coping with the demanding workload required of graduate students
 - ultimately completing the challenging graduate program successfully
- Strategies
 - surviving the first semesters
 - maintaining grades of “A”s throughout the years of study
- Ups and downs of completing a dissertation
- Useful tips for studying and training in the US

Ph.D. Program Milestones

- Preliminary exam
 - required for admission to the Ph.D. program
 - written and oral tests
- Qualifying exam
 - after completing the required coursework
 - in-class written tests of topics and/or courses (one hour/each)
 - research projects in courses
 - oral exam
- Candidacy
 - proposal presentation (chapters 1, 2, & 3) -> revisions
 - DISSERTATION RESEARCH**
 - dissertation/oral defense (complete dissertation: 5 chapters) -> revisions
- Graduation

Personal Experiences

1. **How to cope** with the highly demanding workload required of graduate students and
 2. **Ultimately how to complete** the challenging graduate program successfully
- Defined a dissertation research topic of interest early
 - Was general at the beginning, more defined (focused) at a later time
 - Selected courses around the topic
 - Wrote papers/assignments around the research topic
 - Had good time management (e.g., using timelines)
 - Developed [Ph.D. degree plan](#)
 - Transferred some credit hours from Master's degree
 - Took core courses & required courses first
 - Developed [dissertation plan](#)

Personal Experiences

- Met critical deadlines for all courses taken each semester.
- Maintained a good relationship with advisor and other faculty members:
 - Was considerate about their busy schedules (teaching, research, and community service)
 - Met during office hours; was prepared before meetings (requested appointments, had questions to be discussed in advance, and sent a reminder of the meeting)

Strategies

1. **How to survive the first semesters**
2. **How to maintain “A”s throughout the years of study**
 - Tape record the lessons with permission.
 - Before the beginning of each semester, contact each faculty member to request the syllabus. Purchase textbooks and read chapters in advance. (Three courses are considered full load for graduate students.)
 - Pay close attention to grading policies, keep track of all the deadlines, and allocate time adequately. (If a grade was not satisfactory, ask how the assignment could have been improved.)

Ups and Downs of Completing a Dissertation

- Define the dissertation topic early.
- Attend dissertation workshops (annually).
- Complete required five chapters:
 1. Introduction
 2. Literature review
 3. Methodology
 4. Data analysis and findings
 5. Conclusions & recommendations
- Follow a timeline for the dissertation.

Useful Tips

- Online databases for journal articles, e.g. FirstSearch, Web of Science
 - Avoid Wikipedia (not verified information) and Google.
 - Google Scholar is OK (for general background information).
- Electronic dissertation archives from most universities available full text PDF
- Citation and style conventions (APA, Chicago, etc.)

Useful Tips (cont.)

- Take advantage of Endnote, SPSS software and free short courses.
- Use appropriate citations to avoid plagiarism.
- Use writing center.
- Seek native speaker mentors to help with editing.

Useful Tips (cont.)

■ Be involved in

- professional activities (conferences and workshops)
- service activities (Kappa Delta Pi: honorary society)
- social activities ([international student associations](#), sightseeing, travel)

■ Other hints

- Learn about the library and take a tour (part of the orientation). (Students can go straight to the book shelves, borrow many books for the entire semester, and can further extend after that.)
- Apply for a study carrel.
- Take advantage of interlibrary loans.

Non–Degree Programs

- Time management
 - Make/keep critical deadlines
- Isolation
 - Be patient
 - Make opportunities to discuss/share with U.S. faculty, building a future relationship
 - Share experiences/research from Vietnam
- Narrowing the scope of the research project
 - Be practical and realistic

Useful Survival Tips

- Bring unique Vietnamese cultural artifacts (ao dai, monetary denominations, masks, gloves, post cards). Be an ambassador of Vietnam by making cultural presentations to groups.
- Bring typical Vietnamese gifts (e.g., silk, scarves, ties, coffee, chopsticks, embroideries).
- Keep in contact with your home institution. Be a bridge between your U.S. institution and Vietnamese institution. Possibly return and teach at Vietnamese universities in summer.
- Take advantage of Skype software to communicate with your families and friends (www.skype.com/download).
- Learn to drive in Vietnam. Take the tests in the U.S. and get a U.S. driver's license.

Conclusions

Studying and training in the U.S. is difficult, demanding, and challenging, but effective and rewarding.

WARMEST CONGRATULATIONS!

May all your dreams come true!

***Good luck and
all the very best for your
journey ahead!***

Thank you!



Questions

