



January 24, 2012

Chairman
Craig Mundie
Microsoft Corporation

Vice Chairman
Michael L. Ducker
FedEx Express

James Albaugh
Boeing Commercial Airplanes

Richard Lavin
Caterpillar, Inc.
U.S. ABAC Member

Melody B. Meyer
Chevron Asia Pacific Exploration
and Production

Patrick Dawson
The Dow Chemical Company

John C. Lechleiter
Eli Lilly and Company

Richard C. Adkerson
Freeport-McMoRan Copper & Gold,
Inc.

Daniel Alegre
Google, Inc.

Cliff Holland
Johnson & Johnson

Peter L. Scher
JPMorgan Chase & Co.
US ABAC Member

Deb Henretta
The Procter & Gamble Company
U.S. ABAC Chair

Keith E. Williams
Underwriters Laboratories Inc.

Elizabeth Buse
Visa International

Scott Price
Walmart Asia, Inc.

Gold Level Sponsors

Aflac, Inc.
Cargill
GE
PhRMA
Sealed Air Corporation

Mr. Chris Fussner
Chairman, Board of Directors
Vietnam Education Foundation (VEF)
2111 Wilson Boulevard, Suite 700
Arlington, VA 22201
Email: chrisfussner@vef.gov

Dear Mr. Fussner:

I am very pleased to be able to reflect on VEF over the three and a half years I was the US Ambassador to Vietnam. Overall, I can honestly say that the program has been invaluable to its participants, to the United States Government and to the Government of Vietnam.

Clearly the Fellowship program has had an immediate positive impact on those fortunate enough to receive the fellowship. This is reflected in the return rates and in the alumni gatherings which VEF has once a year and to which I have been fortunate enough to attend. But besides the direct benefit to the students who go to the US to learn, there are other indirect benefits to the Vietnamese system. The process whereby VEF selects its participants brings VEF sponsored personnel in contact with many Vietnamese Scholars and Educators and helps the groups to form the kinds of relationships that will pay dividends to the students and faculty of Vietnam in the future. Our people are education ambassadors and they inspire and lead by example. Many VEF selection processes are being used by the Vietnamese Government for their own selection of cohorts going to the United States and other countries to study. VEF personnel play an important role in ensuring transparency, fairness and a level playing field in selection processes that I hope will be reflected in other Educational programs in Vietnam.

A more direct intervention in Vietnamese education is the Visiting Scholar program and the U.S. Faculty Scholar Program. These programs have trained over 30 Vietnamese post-docs in the United States and brought a little more than half that number of American professors to Vietnam to teach either in person, or via real-time video conferencing over the past three years. These programs are changing the world one professor at a time and it will take time to really be able to judge the effectiveness of the VEF programs because the ultimate goal of the programs is to have the participants adapt their new found knowledge to Vietnam and use it to start to change the way teaching is conducted in that country. While the participants I have met are enthusiastic and seem eager to move into pedagogical reform, it is still a bit early to see results other than the new groups of inspired teachers that are setting out to make their mark in the Vietnamese system.

Some of the most lasting impact of VEF on the Vietnamese system and the way in which it complements many US Government programs, is in its capacity building activities. I attended several of these activities and was extremely impressed with the seminars and conferences put on by VEF in targeted education related subjects which will serve to help Vietnam make the best use of its scarce resources to satisfy the demand of its population for better education. The collaboration with the Vietnamese Ministry of Education and Training to initiate the Vietnam OpenCourseWare and the Creative Commons Licenses are two projects that not only multiply resources for Vietnamese schools but also inculcate a respect for Intellectual Property Rights that is sorely needed there both in Academia and in business.

Last but not least, I feel I must acknowledge the excellent management of VEF, especially over the past few years, and its effect on the perception of VEF within the Embassy and the US Government. From the very beginning, VEF made an effort to be extremely transparent and collaborative with the US Embassy. I would visit with Lynne and/or Phuong formally twice or three times a year and see them informally more often than that at various receptions and conferences around Vietnam. Their going the extra mile convinced me that however we want to work with VEF they have the willingness and the determination to make it happen. Regardless of the future status of legislation, I believe the current operating style and management team definitely has the best interests of Vietnamese Education and the US-Vietnam relationship at heart. I have found VEF to be a welcome partner in my own efforts to have a positive impact on the education system in Vietnam and I trust that my successors will as well.

I have been called by some "the Education Ambassador" and I know that VEF was one of the programs through which we would demonstrate to the Vietnamese Government and people that we want to see Vietnam make progress in education for the benefit of its own people. I believe we have done that and I thank VEF for helping to achieve that goal.

I wish VEF every success in the future and hope I may yet participate in some of their activities in Vietnam!

Sincerely,



Amb. Michael Michalak, Ret'd.
219 5th Ave. S.
F-201
Kirkland, WA
98033

E-mail: michalak46@me.com
michalak46@msn.com

Tel.: 206-707-2228