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OVERVIEW: February 2013

The Vietnam Education Foundation (VEF) was established by the U.S. Congress under the Vietnam Education Foundation Act (2000) to create educational exchange activities for Vietnamese nationals to pursue graduate studies or professional development at U.S. universities and for Americans to teach at Vietnamese universities and, thus, build the bilateral relationship between the United States and Vietnam. VEF is governed by a thirteen-member Board of Directors: two U.S. Senators, two U.S. Representatives, three U.S. cabinet members, and six members from the U.S. citizenry appointed by the U.S. President. A Board-appointed American Executive Director oversees VEF operations, conducted through two highly coordinated offices: the U.S. Headquarters in the Washington, D.C., area and the Vietnam Field office in Hanoi. VEF receives an annual budget of U.S. \$5 million from the U.S. Congress until 2018.

The VEF programs, as prescribed in the VEF legislation, focus on the sciences (natural, physical, and environmental), engineering, mathematics, medicine (including public health and health sciences), and technology (including information technology), known as the STEM¹ fields. The following are the core VEF activities: (1) Fellowship Program that brings Vietnamese nationals to the United States for graduate degree programs, funded through cost-sharing agreements with U.S. universities; (2) Visiting Scholar Program that funds Vietnamese nationals with a Ph.D. to develop their professional skills through studies, research, and/or observational activities at leading U.S. institutions; and (3) U.S. Faculty Scholar Program that provides grants to American professors to teach courses in English at Vietnamese institutions for one or two semesters, on site in Vietnam or via interactive, real-time videoconferencing. VEF capacity-building efforts build the relationship between U.S. and Vietnamese institutions and government entities and strengthen the foundations in Vietnam for the return of VEF Fellows and Visiting Scholars to their home country.

The following data summarizes select activities since operations began in March 2003 until February 2013.

Educational Exchange Programs

Under the **Fellowship Program**, launched in 2003, VEF has supported **421 Fellows** in graduate programs at **84 top-tier U.S. universities**. Of the 215 Fellows who have already received graduate degrees, 152 have been awarded doctoral degrees and 63 have received Master's degrees. Of these 215 graduates, 58 are completing postgraduate Academic Training in the United States before their return to Vietnam, while 157 have fully completed their academic program with VEF. The number of VEF Fellows currently enrolled in U.S. graduate school programs is 206. The following data summarizes details ONLY on the two latter groups.

Of the **157 Fellows**, who have **completed their academic program** with VEF:

- 132 (84%) are working in different sectors: 54 (41%) are working in the academic and research sector; 43 (33%) are working in the corporate sector; 18 (14%) are heading their own private companies or are self-employed; 11 (8%) are working in the development sector; and 6 (4%) are working in the civil service sector.
- 11 (7%) are continuing in doctoral programs with other sources of funding.
- 9 (6%) have just returned to Vietnam and are pursuing employment opportunities.
- 5 (3%) are currently in the United States on J-2 status (spouse of a J-1 student) or on F-2 status (spouse of an F-1 student)

Of the **206 Fellows**, who are **currently enrolled** in U.S. universities:

- 93% are pursuing doctoral degrees and 7% are pursuing Master's degrees.
- 63% are male and 37% female.
- 38% are pursuing degrees in engineering, 18% in biological and biomedical sciences, 17% in computer science, 8% in public health, 7% in physical sciences (astronomy, chemistry, and physics), 6% in mathematical sciences, 5% in agriculture, and 1% in natural resources.

Under the **Visiting Scholar Program**, which began in 2007, **38** Vietnamese with doctorates have gone to **30** major U.S. universities for a self-designed, postdoctoral level program from 5 to 12 months.

- **31** have completed their professional development programs and have returned to Vietnam.
- **7** are expected to finish postdoctoral programs in the United States by August 2013.

¹ Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics, and Medicine

Under the **U.S. Faculty Scholar Program**, which began in 2008, **26 U.S. Faculty Scholar grants** have been awarded to **21** American professors, who have been selected to teach courses in English at **19** Vietnamese institutions either on site in Vietnam or via real-time, interactive video conferencing from the United States. **Nine** (9) of these professors begin their teaching programs this Academic Year 2012-2013.

112 leading U.S. research universities have joined the VEF Alliance, a consortium of accredited U.S. universities in the United States that support the mission of VEF and agree to VEF cost-sharing terms.

Capacity Building

To strengthen science and technology in Vietnam and to foster opportunities for collaborative exchanges between the United States and Vietnam, VEF has organized the following activities.

- **61** scientists from **50** U.S. institutions have delivered **166** lectures/presentations at **58** Vietnamese host institutions.
- **11** seminars/workshops were presented in Vietnam by **29** experts, representing **16** U.S. educational organizations.
- **2** major research reports on higher education in Vietnam: (1) *Observations on Undergraduate Education in Computer Science, Electrical Engineering, and Physics at Select Universities in Vietnam* (August 2006); and (2) *Observations on the Current Status of Education in the Agricultural Sciences in Vietnam* (January 2007).
- Special projects were initiated and/or developed by VEF, including:
 - (1) Millennium Science Initiative (MSI) to establish Centers of Excellence in Vietnam in science and technology in cooperation with the Institute for Advanced Study (Princeton, NJ) and the Science Initiative Group (2004 – 2006). Initiated at the request of the Ministry of Science and Technology (MOST).
 - (2) World Class University (International Standard University) development in Vietnam: arrangements to visit leading U.S. universities (2006). Initiated at the request of the Ministry of Education and Training (MOET).
 - (3) Vietnam Fund for Supporting Technological Creations (VIFOTEC), encouraging creativity in the sciences and technology in Vietnam (2006, 2007) in cooperation with MOET.
 - (4) Conferences in Vietnam: Young Vietnamese Scientists Meeting (June 2005, July 2007); International Biomedical Engineering Conference (July 2007); and OpenCourseWare Consortium (OCWC) Global Meeting (May 2010).
 - (5) Vietnam OpenCourseWare (VOCW) in Vietnam: a repository of high quality, up-to-date teaching and learning materials, available free as open educational resources. VEF successfully transferred its responsibilities for the VOCW program to MOET in January 2010. The project began in 2005.
 - (6) Creative Commons License (CCL) Vietnam to facilitate recognition of intellectual property rights related to VOCW, while CCL serves all forms of creativity. VEF transferred its responsibilities in 2010 to Creative Commons International and a Vietnamese law firm, D&N International.
- VEF assisted the **Vietnam International Education Development (VIED) division of MOET**, at their request, to develop their scholarship program, emulating the VEF process by providing the following: (1) training on developing a successful application and selection process; (2) VEF application materials and forms as well as the VEF Online Management System, created in-house by VEF; (3) opportunity to observe and participate in VEF operations and procedures, including interviews and orientations; and (4) introductions to U.S. university members of the VEF Alliance.
- VEF assisted the **National Foundation for Science and Technology Development (NAFOSTED) of MOST** to develop their Online Management System based on that of VEF.
- At the request of the former U.S. Ambassador Michael Michalak, VEF co-organized and co-sponsored, together with the U.S. Embassy in Hanoi and MOET, the **4th Annual Education Conference** in Vietnam in April 2011 to strengthen higher education ties between the United States and Vietnam.

International educational exchange builds bridges between countries and people, contributing to global peace, tolerance, and understanding. As scientists and engineers, the VEF Fellows, Visiting Scholars, and Faculty Scholars are contributing to a mutually beneficial relationship between Vietnam and the United States.

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