

Experiences on how to win the VEF Fellowship

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U.S. professors and Alumni of the Vietnam Education Foundation (VEF) share helpful ideas and experiences with candidates to win the VEF Fellowship.



Dr. Pham Bao Yen, VEF Alumna, sharing some tips about the VEF Fellowship with candidates - Photo: Van Khoa

3 programs of VEF

VEF was established by the U.S. Congress based on the Vietnam Education Foundation Act of 2000. VEF's educational exchanges focus on the fields of study including sciences, engineering, mathematics, and medicine through 3 programs: The Fellowship Program – sending Vietnamese citizens to study graduate programs in the United States; The Visiting Scholar Program - sending

In order to apply for the VEF Fellowship Program, candidates must meet the minimum requirements: overall Grade Point Average (GPA) from college/ university of at least 7.0/10.0; a score of at least 500 on the TOEFL Paper-Based Test or 6.5 on the IELTS exam and a minimum score of 1000 on the combined GRE General Test. To obtain a VEF Fellowship award, an applicant must succeed in all three rounds: qualification screening conducted by the U.S. National Academies; interview by the panelists including the U.S. professors; then, he/she can be able to apply to U.S. universities. Dr. Nguyen Thai Ha, VEF Alumnus, cohort 2003, commented: “VEF Fellowship not only supports Fellows in terms of finance but also work opportunities. That is the reason why VEF pays U.S. \$27,000 per year for each Fellow only in the first two years. After that, Fellows will get paid by working as teaching or research assistants”.

Vietnamese Scholars to professional development courses in leading U.S. universities; The U.S. Faculty Scholar Program-sending the U.S Faculty Scholars to teach in Vietnam.

Since its official operation in 2003, the Foundation has selected 382 Fellows, 32 Visiting Scholars and 17 U.S. Faculty Scholars.

Capacity to do research

Professor Susan L. Graham from University of California said that candidates should be inquisitive, open to changes, and ready to face challenges. Professor Cynthia L. Chappell, University of Texas at Houston added: “The academic result from college/ university plays an important role in the assessment as to whether candidates will be successful in studying in the United States. In the interview, we look for the talented candidates who have experience and certain research results at undergraduate level”. Most of the U.S. professors, who are the panelists of the recent interviews in August, comment that Vietnamese students have every chance to receive the Fellowships and to compete with other students when studying in the United States.

Dr. Tien Dung Le, VEF Alumnus, Cohort 2005, shared: “During the interview, the professors will assess whether a candidate has comprehensive abilities to finish the program, face challenges and get acquainted with international friends, coming from diverse cultural backgrounds”.

Priority to under-represented fields of study

Annually, VEF selects a maximum of 45 candidates for the Fellowship Program. According to Dr. Lynne McNamara, VEF Executive Director, if there are more than 45 candidates who are equally competent and qualified, priorities will be

given to under-represented fields first, then female candidates, and then those from the South and Central regions of Vietnam. Dr. McNamara said that currently, the number of VEF Fellowship applicants from the North is more than those from the South and the Centre. Therefore, VEF is focusing on promoting its Fellowship Program to regions from which there are not many candidates. Dr. Nguyen Thi Thanh Phuong, VEF Country Director, stated that among 45 successful candidates for the Fellowship Program, Cohort 2012, the percentage of candidates from the South and Central region is 60% and that of female candidates is 40%. Those are the highest percentages so far.

According to Mr. David Duong, a Vietnamese American appointed as VEF Board Member by the U.S. President Barack Obama, the Foundation should open to more fields of study to attract more female candidates and increase the number of scholarship beneficiaries. Mr. Duong also added that VEF is making efforts toward the establishment of an American University in Vietnam.

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