

DUKEENGAGE IN VIETNAM

Building infrastructure and teaching youth. *This program is organized by CET Academic Programs in collaboration with DukeEngage.*

Dates: June 15 – August 11, 2019

(Dates subject to change up until the point of departure.)

Service Themes

- Community development/outreach
- Health/human services
- Education/literacy

Program Focus

Making an impact in the local community in Quang Tri through the development and completion of a local construction project, ESL instruction to students in grades 8-11, and cross-cultural exchange with local roommates and community members.

Curricular Connections: While all students are welcome to apply, this program may be of particular interest to students studying anthropology, sociology, international development, education, and engineering. (See below for additional details about connecting this program to your academic work.)

Program Leaders

- Benjamin Pollok, Asia Programs Manager, CET Academic Programs
- Vu Ho, Resident Director, CET Vietnam. Vu comes from the central highlands of Vietnam, moved to Ho Chi Minh City to attend both high school and college, graduated from the University of Economics of Ho Chi Minh City in 2013 with a BA in finance, and first joined the CET Vietnam team in 2010 as a Vietnamese roommate.
- Loc Pham, Academic Director, CET Vietnam. Loc received his PhD in Comparative Literature from the University of Massachusetts, Amherst in 2011. Prior to joining CET, he served as Vice President of Hoa Sen University, a private university in Ho Chi Minh City. He also served as Dean of Faculty & Professors in the University's Department of Languages & Cultural Studies. Loc has published in diverse research areas, including postcolonial studies, gender studies, and translation studies. His most recent academic pursuit is researching social and emotional learning (SEL) as it relates to the study abroad experience.
- Walter Lee, MD, Associate Professor of Surgery, Associate Professor in Radiation Oncology and Co-Director, Head and Neck Program, Duke Cancer Institute; DukeEngage in Vietnam Faculty Fellow. Dr. Lee's areas of research include immunotherapy, global health, medical device development, and medical education.

Program Overview

On this program, projects are developed in conjunction with local community members and carried out by DukeEngage students and local Vietnamese roommates from nearby Hue University. Typically, projects are a combination of activities that contribute to local infrastructure and ESL teaching—a vital skill for advancement in Vietnam. Students promote cross-cultural understanding and exchange through events like the Field Day, community volunteer events, and extracurricular activities to supplement ESL classes. The program begins with a short orientation in Ho Chi Minh City. Vietnam's incredible development over the past two decades has exacerbated social and economic inequalities between the country's urban and rural residents. This lack of opportunities in rural Vietnam has caused an exodus of the young and educated from small towns to metropolitan centers, leading to a lack of investment in social services and infrastructure development in the countryside. Still unrecovered from decades of war, Central Vietnam is an area of

particularly high need for development investment. DukeEngage and CET have worked with the community in Quang Tri since 2010 and have developed a trusting relationship with community members that enables student groups to complete meaningful grassroots development work each summer.

Student Learning Objectives/Outcomes

By the end of the program, students should:

- discuss from experience how communication can transcend language and culture
- express comfort working in cultural settings other than their own
- develop a more nuanced understanding of pressing community issues in rural Vietnam
- have pushed their comfort zones through their contributions to the program projects
- better understand the importance of stakeholder engagement in grassroots development work
- comprehend the role and importance of relationships and collaboration in instigating change
- be more capable team members and contributors to group projects
- articulate the ongoing impact and utility of the DukeEngage-Vietnam program to the local community in Quang Tri and in their personal development

Partnership Opportunities

Students participate in various education and infrastructure building projects in rural communities. Projects are selected and teams are determined before students arrive. CET staff meet with Quang Tri community members to learn more about the current community needs and then determine how students can practically assist in sustainably meeting those needs. Each year, the group does one teaching project and one infrastructure project.

Students start at one of several building worksites with their roommates before dawn. All projects are selected in conjunction with the local community and aim to improve local sanitation, public health resources, ease of transportation, or quality of life for local residents. Projects in the past have included:

- A hand-washing station for an elementary school;
- A new, usable toilet for an elementary school;
- Erecting safety structures to prevent injuries from motorized vehicles;
- Paving a road in a remote area to ensure driver and pedestrian safety and improve sanitation;
- Building a basketball court and organizing a community basketball tournament.

In 2019, students will contribute to a construction project in collaboration with the local Youth Center. While the exact project is not yet finalized, potential undertakings include a local running track or playground.

In the afternoons, DukeEngage participants teach ESL classes to students, typically grades 8-11, in a local school building. Vietnamese roommates act as co-teachers and together create unique lesson plans. Class content often focuses on oral communication.

Students participate in various intercultural exchange events that aim to promote international understanding with both the local community and their roommates. Past students have participated in a cultural show that showcases American and Vietnam culture, facilitated a youth soccer tournament and other sporting events, and organized a fundraiser for local charities.

Students will be required to participate in extensive physical labor during their service work. These tasks could include painting, transporting building materials, pouring concrete for a foundation, cleaning up rivers and roads, assisting with building construction and restoration. Students should bring clothes and shoes that are appropriate for manual labor. The climate is tropical and it's often muddy, thus students should dress accordingly. Exact infrastructure and educational projects are determined in consultation with local partners' needs and thus are subject to change.

Program Requirements

Language Requirements: None, though Vietnamese language skills are a plus.

Coursework Requirements: None (see Curricular Connections below for some suggested courses).

Personal Qualities: Students are assessed based on the degree to which they meet the following criteria. Not all criteria must be met, but a strong candidate will have a combination of most of these attributes:

- Flexibility and high tolerance of ambiguity;
- Experience building or teaching;
- Experience volunteering, especially with building and/or teaching projects;
- Interest in Vietnamese culture and language;
- Experience volunteering and/or traveling in a developing country;
- The ability to work well on a diverse team; and
- Willingness to work in physically demanding environments.

Curricular Connections

Courses on Southeast Asian culture or history, specifically Vietnam, as well as education and international development may be of interest.

Program Details

Description of Community: Students will begin the program with a short orientation in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam. Students will then relocate to a rural area in the Central Region where they will continue orientation and conduct their project work. One of the areas hit hardest by the Vietnam War, Quang Tri is still recovering from the effects of Agent Orange and decades of poverty. Quang Tri has a tropical climate and hilly terrain.

Housing and Meals: Students will live in guesthouses with Vietnamese roommates who will also participate in all aspects of the program. In both Ho Chi Minh City and Quang Tri, all students live in the same guesthouse, which offers simple but comfortable rooms. Air conditioning, hot water, western-style toilets, and internet are available throughout Ho Chi Minh City but are less commonly found at the program site in Quang Tri. For example, students usually wash clothes by hand, have irregular access to the internet, and experience occasional power outages.

Living with Vietnamese roommates provides DukeEngage students with a unique perspective on contemporary and historical issues in Vietnam. Students engage with local development issues by participating in projects that aim to benefit the community. Students will perform physical labor for the majority of the program and thus should be in good physical health. Students must know how to ride a bicycle. Participants must also be amenable to frequent scheduling changes. It is expected that students actively practice and improve communication skills with the Vietnamese people.

Students will primarily eat as a group, and should expect to eat traditional Vietnamese food: pho (rice noodles, thinly sliced beef, and beef both), vegetables stir fried with sauces over rice, small portions of cooked meat over white rice or rice noodles, etc. Students will also have opportunities to purchase food from vendors selling local fruits, Vietnamese sandwiches, and various stir-fry dishes. Due to the high level of physical activity and the limited availability of more diverse food options in the program location, students are encouraged to practice flexible eating habits. Cooking for yourself, vegetarian diets, and severe allergies may be difficult to accommodate.

Health Note: Shellfish and soy are common ingredients in the local cuisine. Ready, nearby access to treatment for travelers experiencing a severe allergic reaction to this and other food(s) may be limited at this program site. Students who are considering applying to DukeEngage-Vietnam should review these facts with their families and medical providers before applying.

If you do not eat certain types of food for cultural, religious or personal reasons, please contact the DukeEngage office, dukeengage@duke.edu, to discuss whether your dietary needs can be reasonably accommodated at this program site.

Transportation: DukeEngage provides transportation to and from service placements and all scheduled program activities. In Ho Chi Minh City, students will travel primarily on foot, by bus, or by taxi. When the group takes enrichment trips, a private van will be used. In rural Vietnam, most students will travel by bike and on foot to the worksites daily and must be comfortable riding a bicycle for up to 30 minutes each way. When biking, all students are required to wear a bike helmet. Students are prohibited from riding Vietnamese motorbikes (mini motorcycles).

Communication: Students will be provided with a basic local cell phone for program-related and emergency communication. Internet connections in Vietnam can often be spotty, so students should take this into account when considering their communication and social media habits.

Local Safety and Security; Cultural Norms, Mores and Practices: As part of their planning, DukeEngage strongly advises all prospective applicants to familiarize themselves with the common challenges travelers encounter at this program site in order to make an informed application decision that is right for them. We recommend starting with these two resources:

- the International SOS (ISOS) portal for up-to-the-minute travel, health and security advice ([Log in to the Duke ISOS portal](#) with your Duke NetID)
- the [Diversity, Identity and Global Travel](#) section of the DukeEngage website

Opportunities for Reflection: Your site coordinator will lead weekly reflection sessions in which you and your local Vietnamese roommate will be expected to participate. During the reflections sessions, students may reflect on what surprises them about their environment, discuss their experiences interacting with the local community, and share thoughts on personal challenges and solutions. More details will be shared during on-site orientation.

Other Opportunities: Students will participate in service projects all morning and afternoon. Many evenings and some weekends may include other activities, teaching preparation, or group discussions. In general, students will have limited free time to pursue independent activities. Lunch breaks and “downtime” are typically spent interacting with local community members. Students may spend their free time getting smoothies or playing soccer with local students, or traveling with their local Vietnamese roommates during available weekends. Open water swimming is not a sponsored activity in any DukeEngage program.

More Information

- *Vietnam Rising Dragon*, by Bill Hayton, a former BBC correspondent in Vietnam, who lived in Vietnam for years. The book is extremely well-documented. An easy read and the best overall introduction to today's Vietnam.
- *It's a Living: Work and Life in Vietnam Today*. G. Sasges, ed. U.S. release date in November 2013. Through 67 interviews and 59 color photographs, *It's a Living* reveals the energy and struggle of the world of work in Vietnam today. Based on frank and freewheeling interviews conducted by students, the book engages a broad range of Vietnamese on their feelings about work, life, and getting ahead. By providing a ground-level view of the texture of daily working life in the midst of rapid and unsettling change, the book reveals Vietnam today as a place where ordinary people are leveraging whatever assets they have, not just to survive, but to make a better life for themselves.
- *Night, Again: Contemporary Fiction from Vietnam*. Linh Dinh, ed. An excellent collection of short stories by the best contemporary Vietnamese writers. A must-read. A fascinating and readable introduction to aspirations and dreams of today's Vietnamese.
- 2017 group blog: <https://dukeengagevietnam2017.wordpress.com/>
- 2018 group blog: <https://dukeengagevietnam2018.wordpress.com/>
- CET Academic Programs in Vietnam Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/CET-Academic-Programs-in-Vietnam-237048583046901/>
- CET Academic Programs website: <https://cetacademicprograms.com/programs/vietnam/>