



# Vietnam Market for Education and Training

By U.S. Commercial Service – Vietnam  
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## Overview

Educational exchange is a cornerstone of the U.S. bilateral relationship with Vietnam and a top prospect opportunity for U.S. universities and educational institutions. The number of students from Vietnam fluctuated moderately throughout the 1980s and 1990s with a steady trend of growth beginning in the late 1990s. The number of Vietnamese students has risen significantly since 1998/99, with double-digit growth in many years. Vietnam has been among the top 20 colleges or universities for origin of international students in the U.S. since 2006/07 and is now ranked 8th. According to the Open Doors 2011, the number of Vietnamese students enrolled in U.S. institutions of higher education in 2010/11 increased from 13,112 to 14,888, a 14 percent increase.

A significant increase in per capita income in the past ten years, the robust expansion of both the manufacturing and service sectors, and the value Vietnamese traditionally place on education are creating substantial opportunities for education and training services providers.

However, competition will continue to grow as globalization creates more opportunities for study elsewhere. Competitors in Asia (including Australia and Singapore) promote proximity, affordable costs, and the possibility of post-graduation employment.

Improving domestic education is a top priority for the Vietnamese Government which has various plans and goals, such as a 10 percent annual increase in domestic university enrollment and developing a higher education system more in line with regional and global standards. To this end, the Vietnamese Government has increased budget allocations, liberalized private sector involvement, and encouraged foreign participation in developing education and training services in Vietnam. However, many observers find the reform process to be slow, and domestic higher education falls far short of meeting demand with only 548,000 seats for the more than 1.2 million candidates who take the university entrance exam each year.

Recognizing the value of U.S. community colleges, Vietnam is the 5<sup>th</sup> largest country of origin for students at U.S. community colleges.

## Demand

With a population of nearly 90 million and robust GDP growth, Vietnam is a promising market for U.S. providers of education.

Vietnam's economy has seen robust economic growth for the last decade, and Vietnam has ambitious plans to attract foreign investment, create new industries and put in the necessary infrastructure to continue economic development. With more than 50 percent of Vietnam's population under the age of 30, developing a well-trained labor force is crucial. Education and training are top priorities for the Vietnamese government, which needs to equip the labor force with scientific, technological, and management skills. As new industries expand, a university

degree is increasingly essential for young Vietnamese workers searching for higher paying jobs in newly emerging industries.

The government has acknowledged that the current education system is unable to meet demand. According to a survey conducted by the Vietnamese government, the World Health Organization, and UNICEF, 90 percent of students in Vietnam want to enroll in a university. In practice, however, opportunities for higher education are limited since the system can accommodate only a fraction of those seeking admission. In 2011, Vietnamese universities had seats for only 548,000 for the more than 1.2 million candidates who took university entrance exams, and demand to take the exam continues to rise. Although the number of university students has doubled since 1990, the number of teachers remains virtually unchanged. Furthermore, a large percentage of university graduates cannot find jobs in their field (or at all) without further training, demonstrating a need for a more practical and effective education for students. As a result, many Vietnamese students are looking for education opportunities outside of Vietnam.

## Key Trends and Statistics

With a booming economy, increased global integration and exposure, and a great need for higher education, the Vietnamese are showing an unprecedented level of interest in studying in the United States. According to Open Doors 2011, the annual report on international academic mobility published by the Institute of International Education, the facts are as follows:

- The number of Vietnamese students enrolled in U.S. institutions of higher education 2010/11 increased from 13,112 to 14,888, a 14 percent increase.
- Vietnam now ranks 8th among the leading countries of origin, up from 20th five years ago.
- The majority of Vietnamese students study at the undergraduate level. In 2010/11, their breakdown was as follows: 74.2% undergraduate; 16.3% graduate students; 6.0% other; and 3.5% OPT (Optional Practical Training).
- The U.S. is the world's second leading English-speaking host of Vietnamese students behind Australia
- Over half of the Vietnamese students studying in the US are located in Texas, Washington, and California

## Best Prospects

Top areas of study for Vietnamese students include **business management, finance, engineering, science and technology, IT, and health care programs**. In addition, a number of opportunities exist that target the specific needs of the Vietnamese market:

### **4-year Degree University Study**

More Vietnamese students are pursuing 4-year study in universities. Business management, banking and finance, engineering, science and technology, IT, and health care programs are often their top choices.

### **ESL and English Preparatory Programs**

As Vietnam transitions to a market economy, English skills are becoming essential for many job seekers. Schools that offer ESL and English preparatory programs are attractive choices for students who need to develop these skills before starting their college programs.

### ***Technical and Vocational Training***

Vietnam has a growing demand for skilled workers and production technicians as industrial sectors become a main provider of employment. According to the Ministry of Education and Training (MOET), the country needs 10,000-15,000 skilled workers trained each year in the service and industrial fields. Training facilities in Vietnam cannot satisfy this demand effectively which presents an opportunity for American schools to provide much needed professional training.

### ***Community Colleges***

Community colleges offer financial and academic accessibility, serve as a bridge for Vietnamese students to acclimate to English, American culture and the U.S. education system, as well as a transition to four-year universities. Vietnam is the 5<sup>th</sup> largest country of origin for students at U.S. community colleges.

### ***Programs aimed at cultivating 'Soft Skills'***

Due to the rote-learning style of the Vietnamese education system, there is a need to cultivate skills such as leadership, public speaking and teamwork.

## **Resources**

American institutions of higher education that would like a copy of our Vietnam Education Marketing Guide Information may request one via email.

Information about studying in the USA is available at the Education USA website, representing a global network of more than 400 advisory centers supported by the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs at the U.S. Department of State. <http://educationusa.state.gov/>

Institute of International Education  
<http://iievn.org>

Vietnam Education and Training Center  
[www.vetecusa.com](http://www.vetecusa.com)

Vietnam Education Foundation  
[www.vef.gov](http://www.vef.gov)

Viet Abroad  
[www.vietabroad.org](http://www.vietabroad.org)

Higher Engineering Education Alliances  
[www.heeap.org](http://www.heeap.org)

American Chamber of Commerce in Vietnam  
<http://www.amchamvietnam.com/>

For further information, please contact the following persons/agencies:

Ms. Ngo Anh, Commercial Specialist  
U.S. Commercial Service Hanoi - American Embassy in Hanoi  
E-mail: [Ngo.Anh@trade.gov](mailto:Ngo.Anh@trade.gov)

Mr. Le Anh, Commercial Specialist  
U.S. Commercial Service Ho Chi Minh City – U.S. Consulate General in HCMC  
E-mail: [Le.Anh@trade.gov](mailto:Le.Anh@trade.gov)