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**Missouri Community College Association (MCCA) and Viet Nam Association of
Community Colleges (VACC) Partnership**

Conversational English Language Assistant Program (CELAP)

Viet Nam (as it is spelled by the Vietnamese) is located in Southeast Asia and is best known by U.S. Americans as the land of the controversial war. The Vietnamese have a popular saying; “Viet Nam is county; not a war!” and it is in this spirit that a partnership between the Viet Nam Association of Community Colleges and the Missouri Community Colleges was developed to enhance community college education in both nations. Through the efforts of two Missouri educators, Dr. Kent Farnsworth, Center for International Community College Educational Leadership (CICCEL) at the University of Missouri St. Louis, and Professor Cindy Epperson, St. Louis Community College, Missouri community college current and past employees have an opportunity to live in Viet Nam for a minimum of one month and assist Vietnamese community college English teachers with conversational English.

In November 2007 the Missouri Community College Association (MCCA) extended an honorary membership to the Vietnam Association of Community Colleges (VACC) who in turn made MCCA an honorary member of VACC in April 2008. On November 7, 2008, a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) was signed to begin the Conversational English Language Assistant Program between VACC and MCCA. Viet Nam has thirteen (13) community colleges, with eight (8) of the thirteen (13) colleges participating in the program. The participating Vietnamese community colleges are:

Participating Vietnamese Community Colleges

NAME	VOLUNTEER NUMBERS	ACCOMMODATIONS	FOOD
Binh Thuan Community College (South)	2 persons	Room in Binh Thuan CC	1 meal per day
Ha Tay Community College (North)	1 person	Room in Ha Tay CC	1 meal per day
Dong Thap Community College (South)	1 person	Room in Dong Thap CC	1 meal per day
Ca Mau Community College (South)	2 persons	Room in Ca Mau CC	1 meal per day
Hau Giang Community	1 person	Room in Hau Giang CC	1 meal per

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College (South)			day
Hai Phong Community College (North)	2 persons	Room in Hai Phong CC	1 meal per day
Tra Vinh University (South)	3 persons	Room in Tra Vinh CC	1 meal per day
Binh Duong Technical Economic College	2 persons	Room in Binh Duong Technical Economic College	1 meal per day



See map (separate document) for locations

Contact information for the VACC is:

VIETNAM ASSOCIATION OF COMMUNITY COLLEGES (VACC)

18 Trung Kinh Str., Yen Hoa, Cau Giay Dist., Ha Noi, Vietnam

Tel: (84-4) 516-0428/782-0382 Fax: (84-4) 851-4703

Email: catd@viettel.vn

It is important that initial contacts between Missouri educators interested in Viet Nam are made through Cindy Epperson (cepperson@stlcc.edu), therefore please do not contact VACC directly. Vietnamese culture requires relationship building prior to conducting business. MCCA representatives have developed the necessary relationship with VACC and can therefore conduct communication and coordination between the two associations.

Information About Viet Nam

Viet Nam is located in Southeastern Asia, bordering the Gulf of Thailand, Gulf of Tonkin, and South China Sea, alongside China, Laos, and Cambodia with a population of 86 million. It is one of the five remaining Communist countries in the world. The capitol, Ha Noi (Hanoi), is the governmental center, but Ho Chi Minh City (formerly Saigon) is the center of economic and Western development. In 1986, government made policy, *Doi Moi*, meaning “renovation,” opened up the economy to international trade and investments and restructured policies to modernize the economy and create export-driven industries. To learn more about *Doi Moi* visit:

<http://www.csuchico.edu/~cheinz/syllabi/asst001/fall98/thompson/doimoi.htm>

<http://www.mofa.gov.vn/en/nr040807104143/nr040807105001/ns050114140331>

<http://www.sjsu.edu/faculty/watkins/vietnam.htm>

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To familiarize you with Viet Nam, a plethora of websites are available. Recommended sites include:

<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/vn.html>

<http://www.vietnamtourism.com/> (Ministry of Tourism)

<http://www.vietnamembassy-usa.org/> (Vietnamese Embassy)

<http://www.topix.net/world/vietnam> (current news)

<http://www.lonelyplanet.com/worldguide/vietnam> (Lonely Planet Travel Guide)

<http://vietnamnews.vnagency.com.vn/> (News in English)

<http://www.business-in-asia.com/vietnam.htm> (Doing Business in Viet Nam)

<http://www.infoplease.com/ipa/A0108144.html> (General Information)

<http://www.dfat.gov.au/geo/vietnam/index.html> (General Information from the Australian Government)

Project Logistics

The coordination of the volunteers will be through Cindy Epperson (cepperson@stlcc.edu), past president of MCCA and VACC.

The American volunteer will be provided with room and board, one meal per day and a \$100 stipend per month. The accommodations are provided by the Vietnamese host college. Room accommodations will include: a western style bed, air conditioning, kitchen with facilities, cabinet, table, desk, chairs, TV, internet access and in-province telephone. A bicycle will be provided for local transportation. Most Vietnamese travel by foot, bicycle or motorbike. Taxi service is available in most locations. Laundry services are available for a small fee (e.g., jeans \$1.00/pair) in each of the communities. Western style medical facilities are available in each city where the participating colleges are located.

VACC requires a **minimum one month stay** at one college. American volunteers may choose to “teach” at more than one college with a one month commitment at each college. VACC is seeking volunteers year round.

Transportation costs will be incurred by the American volunteer. Vietnam Air is the provider of air transportation within Vietnam. Vietnam Airlines is a state owned enterprise. Ticketing through the internet is difficult to accomplish directly with the airline. Working through a travel agent who specializes in Viet Nam is recommended. Airfares are cheapest when arranged in Viet Nam, therefore the American volunteer will work with Ms. Thuy to arrange in - country airfare that will be paid for by the American volunteer. Vietnam Air operates one daily flight between Rach Gia and Ho Chi Minh City (a 6-8 hour drive) and several daily flights between Ho Chi Minh City and Ha Noi. International flights from Los Angeles, Chicago and Dallas to Ho Chi Minh City and Ha Noi are available through several American and Asian airlines (e.g., United, American, Cathay Pacific, Korean Air, Japan Airlines, Viet Nam Air, etc.). The most expensive time to travel between the U.S. and Viet Nam is during Tet (Vietnamese New Year – late January and February and the summer months of June, July and August). Airline tickets from the U.S. to HCMC average between \$1300 and \$2,000. During Tet the tickets can cost over \$2,000.

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A passport and business visa are necessary. Allow up two months to complete the Visa process which currently costs \$65 plus the mailing costs. To order a Visa, the American volunteer must receive a letter of invitation from VACC through the MCCA project volunteer. A current curriculum vita/resume and a completed application packet are necessary to obtain the letter. Once the letter is available, the volunteer will utilize the Consular Services of the Embassy of Viet Nam at http://www.vietnamembassy.us/consular_services/visa_info/ to obtain the visa. It is critical to give yourself two months for this process which requires you to mail your passport to the embassy. Spending the extra money to expedite the mailing process is recommended.

The American volunteer is responsible for obtaining permission for leave from his/her college. The Missouri Community College Association (MCCA) will provide a copy of the VACC/MCCA Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) which can be used as a supporting document in a sabbatical or leave proposal. MCCA requires a letter from the volunteer's college president verifying leave approval for the designated time the volunteer will be in Viet Nam, including travel time. This letter must be submitted with the application packet in order for the final arrangements to be made with the Vietnamese college.

The American volunteer may bring a spouse as long as the presence of the spouse does not interfere with the volunteer fulfilling his/her agreement with the VACC. The Vietnamese colleges are currently not conducive to children living on campus.

The American volunteer will be responsible for engaging in conversational English with the students as instructed by the Vietnamese community college English instructor. The American volunteer and the Vietnamese instructor will begin communicating by email approximately one month prior to the American's departure for Viet Nam. The American volunteer and the Vietnamese English instructor may chose to share pictures during their email conversations. Phone calls between the two countries are expensive unless a program such as SKYPE is utilized, therefore email is the viable communication tool. The time difference between the two countries is 12 hours based on CST.

Volunteers may offer additional services such as training to the faculty, staff and administration of the Vietnamese community college. The community college concept is developing in Viet Nam. The Vietnamese are creating their own unique community college model by studying various community college models (e.g., Canadian, Netherlands, and U.S.) around the globe. Any knowledge shared with the Vietnamese college regarding procedure and process at your U.S. college may be very helpful, so please share your skill set with your Vietnamese contact so s/he can ascertain what would be helpful to the development of his/her college.

The typical community college day in Viet Nam is Monday – Friday, 7 am – 5 pm with a rest break between 11 a.m. and 1 p.m. For the American volunteer, a degree in English is not necessary because the Vietnamese English teachers have been very successful in terms of written English. Pronunciation is the current need therefore conversations in English will be the daily routine of the American volunteer.

In Viet Nam, the Ministry of Education and Training (MOET) controls all levels of education including tertiary (higher) education. Western style textbooks for each discipline are non-

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existent at the community college level. Each community college instructor writes out his/her notes for the semester which are approved by MOET. Upon approval, the notes are copied for the students.

Community college tuition averages \$100 (USD) per semester. The average Vietnamese community college instructor earns between \$100 (USD) and \$125 (USD) per month. University faculty earn between \$100 – \$150 (USD) per month. This information is shared with potential MCCA volunteers to enhance your understanding of this opportunity.

The Vietnam currency is the Vietnamese Dong (VND). As of September 2009, \$1 equates to 17,815 dong (VND). To calculate the current exchange rate visit <http://www.oanda.com/convert/classic>. Travelers Cheques are easily changeable at banks and moneychangers all over the country. Western Union and other cash by wire services have also become quite the norm for sending and receiving monies from outside the country. ATM machines are easily located and accept American debit and credit cards. Visa is the preferred credit card in Vietnam. Be sure to notify your bank and credit card companies before your departure informing them that you will be in Viet Nam and utilizing your card. You can ask for the transaction fee when you call. American currency (paper only) is accepted by almost all merchants and at hotels and restaurants. One dollar bills, though bulky, are very useful when making purchases, paying for transportation, etc. **Be sure your bills are new and are not ripped, folded or worn.** American coins are not accepted anywhere. Fine jewelry stores will ‘exchange’ money from U.S. dollars to VN dong. They prefer larger bills when making an exchange.

Your family members in the U.S. may wish to purchase a long distance phone card. When purchasing a phone card, be sure to confirm that Viet Nam is included and ascertain any service fee per call (beyond the per minute price). A quick Google of “international phone cards” will provide a plethora of sources. American cell phones will work in Viet Nam if your service includes an international plan. Check with your provider for the options your plan provides before departing from the U.S. You may also want to check on SKYPE service through the internet. Many SKYPE services are free.

Items to bring with you include: small packages of Kleenex and/or moist wipes which can be useful while traveling, pictures of your family/home/pets/college/city of residence, travel guide of Viet Nam, rain gear, a plastic cup, small bottle of dish detergent which can be used for dishes and washing clothes in your sink, medicine (prescription and over the counter) in the original bottle, extra batteries if your equipment utilizes them, flashlight, comfortable shoes including a pair of flip-flops, camera, laptop if you own one, adapter for the electrical outlets, a USB drive, small gifts (do not need to be expensive and can be from your college such as pens), and business cards. Clorox or Lysol wipes are useful. You can purchase most items in the indoor markets, but it is hard to find these items: hand sanitizer, chocolate, Clorox and other wipes and chewing gum in the flavors we are accustomed to. Women’s makeup is very expensive and women’s personal hygiene items are very different from those in the U.S. so you may want to plan accordingly. Reminder: the Vietnamese are significantly shorter and lighter than Americans so be sure you take enough undergarments, socks, etc. with you. An American

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woman who wears size “medium” in the U.S. will require an “XXL” in Vietnam which is not a common size in the average store.

Contract

MCCA will forward an application packet to the potential volunteer once the initial contact has been established and the volunteer has spoken with the MCCA project coordinator. The application will be processed (allow 6 week minimum from the time it arrives at MCCA). If approved, the volunteer will be sent a contract stating the dates of the agreement, the location of the Vietnamese college, and the benefits provided by VACC. The volunteer will release MCCA, VACC, and the project coordinators of any liability through his/her signature on the contract.

This international project is a work in progress therefore many questions may need to be individually answered. For additional information, contact Cindy Epperson at cepperson@stlcc.edu.

Liability

This project is an international volunteer opportunity developed through a relationship between the Missouri Community College Association (MCCA) and the Vietnam Association of Community Colleges (VACC). By volunteering the participant recognizes that neither association (MCCA or VACC) is liable for any outcome of the volunteer experience.

Forms To Be Completed And Submitted To Apply (Application Packet)

The project requires the completion of the Application, Assumption of Risk and Liability, and Health forms. In addition, a curriculum vita or resume and the letter from the college president approving the leave of the faculty/staff member should be included in the application packet. The application packet should be sent with all forms and documents included. Please do not send in various parts. All forms are available by contacting Cindy Epperson at cepperson@stlcc.edu. The application process takes six to eight weeks, so please plan accordingly with up to an additional month for the visa process.