

2019 Annual Summary of Activities

AMA-Savills Computer Room at HCMUE

On 23 August 2019, AMA in collaboration with Savills Vietnam opened its first “AMA-Savills Computer Room” at the student dormitory of the University of Education of Ho Chi Minh City. The purpose of this computer room is to provide free and convenient access to desktop computers to the underprivileged students living in this dorm. AMA estimated that up to 500-600 students lack easy access to computers, out of a total population of about 1500 students living at the dorm. This dorm was built in 1992 and mainly houses poor and underprivileged students of the university, including many AMA scholarship recipients. Typically, for students who cannot conveniently access computers on campus or at home, they have to go to the closest private computer centers and pay for access to desktops, which creates another financial burden for them and their families (these students at the dorm are the most financially challenged people and they get dorm access for exactly that reason). We hope to make a small difference in their lives with this computer center.

AMA-Savills Computer Room offers 12 desktop computers and it is expandable to 18 desktops in the near future. We may also seek laptop computer donations and start a laptop overnight rental program to meet needs of more students. In addition, we can take up more space overtime and expand the size of this computer room together with the university. This program can also be expanded to Hue and Danang at DHSP.

We thank Savills Vietnam for their donations of computers, desks, chairs and a small library. AMA's donors funded the construction costs. We also thank CMV Architects for their pro-bono design work, as well as the university officials for their cooperation. We appreciate the team effort and contributions, as we are making a difference together for these underprivileged and deserving students.



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Fulbright's PEN Workshop

In December of 2019, at the kind invitation of Fulbright University of Vietnam, AMA sent 2 of its scholarship recipients at the University of Education in Saigon to attend a training workshop at Fulbright Vietnam. Fulbright in conjunction with the IEG Foundation organized an intensive training workshop on advanced teaching methods for teachers who are working and teaching at high schools, universities, educational institutions and training centers from all over the country. This seminar is part of an effort to initiate the Pioneering Educators Network (PEN), whose mission is to bring groundbreaking, essential and practical educational research knowledge and training workshops, for educators in Vietnam.

AMA proudly selected Nguyen Hoanh Thanh Truc and Nguyen Thi Khanh Ly to participate and learn from this prestigious PEN workshop. They absolutely loved this eye-opening experience and gave a very positive feedback. We also thank Fulbright Vietnam for collaborating with AMA!

Miss Ly: "I have learned a lot and am grateful to AMA for giving me this opportunity."

Miss Truc: "Thank you for giving me the opportunity to study and have great experiences."



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Savill Vietnam's Soft Skills Workshop

On October 13th of 2019, Savills Vietnam was very kind to sponsor a Soft Skills Workshop for AMA recipients at their office in District 1 of Ho Chi Minh City. The focus of this training session was the following:

- Goal Setting: Productivity, Self Confidence & Self Awareness
- Understanding People for Success

This type of training promotes practical learning and fosters more awareness and development of emotional intelligence for our students before they enter the workforce. AMA was happy to see 22 students from HCMUE taking advantage of this pro-bono event, and we thank Savills Vietnam and all their staff for their contribution and compassion.



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AMA Summer Camps and Award Ceremonies in 2019

In June of 2019, AMA sponsored its annual Summer Camp at Son Tra Peninsula in Central Vietnam for over 100 students of University of Education of Danang and Hue. This event was followed by our Summer Camp in Ho Tram Beach in July of 2019 for over 100 students of HCMUE in Saigon. These overnight events always allow recipients the opportunity to relax a little after a long academic year, build or deepen friendships in a community setting, and share personal insights and values with one another. We thank our volunteers who are selfless teachers and educators in guiding our students during these fun and meaningful outings. AMA believes in building a sense of community and instilling good values for our students.

Below are links to view these events and other AMA related videos:

1. Danang & Hue Summer Camp 2019: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3Vdp8NpRSII>
2. Saigon Summer Camp in 2019: <https://youtu.be/hH1BjGv6KEg>
3. Introduction Video to AMA (made in December 2017): <https://youtu.be/UrHZh8ohgO8>
4. Phuoc Thien Non-Profit Primary School: <https://youtu.be/OE9JyCp5cbA>
5. AMA field trip with Phuoc Thien School in Dec 2016: <https://youtu.be/JLexP8L8RbA>
6. Song of “ơn mẹ” by Le Phuong for AMA in Saigon: <https://youtu.be/zJ3P0AR8Wgk>
7. Facebook page of AMA in Vietnamese: <https://www.facebook.com/amaeducationfoundation/?ref=nf>



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In 2019, AMA provided financial grants to 288 undergraduate students and 4 PhD level lecturers at the University of Education of HCM City, Danang, and Hue. BA level students in Saigon received \$600 per year for 4 years from AMA, and \$400 in Danang and Hue (PhD students at \$1000 per year for 3 years).

We welcome 77 new students as recipients of our scholarships in 2019. Below are some background stories from our interview with these students:

1. Mo:

Growing up in a poor family with 7 siblings, Mo and two older sisters had to leave school early after grade 9 and work on paddy field to help her parents raise the younger siblings. Her younger brother also left school in grade 9 to help the family because they needed strength of a male for heavy work. Mo has 3 younger sisters - one of them is a college student, while the other two are younger in school.

One of the reasons Mo had to leave secondary school was the tuition fee, which the family could not afford to pay despite the fact that it was quite small. Every time tuition fee was due, Mo felt the pressure and that led her to make the bitter decision of quitting school and moving to Saigon for work in the next 4 years. One time when Mo was sick and taken to the hospital by her Dad, they ran into a stranger who was very proud of sharing stories about his child being a great student in school. Mo quickly noticed her Dad's sadness when listening to this stranger's story because he could not afford to give Mo the same education this man's child was getting. It was because of that look of her Dad's face that gave her the ultimate motivation to go back to pursue her studies. When Mo later expressed her idea of going back to school, everyone laughed at her thinking that she was joking because Mo has been away from school for such a long time. Putting that behind her, Mo submitted an application to join a monastery to support her studies. She tried her best to achieve the goal of graduating from university. Normally, a woman at her age in her neighborhood would settle down for marriage, but Mo chose to become a freshman at university instead. To Mo, this was the fresh start for new success, though the money problem was still a big obstacle for her to handle. Mo's part-time job was to sew paintings, but it was not enough to earn her a living while studying. Mo shared with us that she would not have a single penny in her pockets often times, let alone the fund needed for the years of studying presently. However, she still dreams of graduating and becoming a good teacher regardless of her difficulties.

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Here are some background stories from our university student interviews in 2019, cont.:

2. Quy:

For Quy, her family has been going through a tough period in life since her mother and brother got seriously disabled. Quy's mother was diagnosed with heart and lung problems in 2011. Her father also went through 3 medical operations, which made his health even worse. She has 3 older brothers who all settled down with families, so they cannot help out much. The main income of Quy's family came from social support for her mother and brother's disabilities, plus a small monthly salary from her older sister working as a secondary school teacher. More than one time, Quy had wanted to quit school to help her family get through these difficult situations, but her family has always opposed her decision based on their hope that Quy can graduate and secure a stable job in the future.

3. Hang:

A tragedy fell upon Hang's family and turned her life upside down when her father suddenly passed away due to a heart attack. After the incident, Hang was sent to a Buddhist pagoda to be taken care of while her mother moved to a bigger city to earn a living for the family. Appreciating her mother's sacrifices, Hang has always studied as much hard as she could. Hang was also participating in various "National Best Student Competitions," where she finished Runner-Up in the most recent competition for Geography. Hang also scored the highest in the entrance exam to the Hue University of Pedagogy. Unfortunately, the health of her mother is currently deteriorating because of diabetes, so she cannot work full-time to support Hang as much as she used to. Even though life is tough, Hang is tougher, feeling confident and positive to be able to reach her dream of being a great teacher one day. She hopes that AMA can help her realize her goal of completing her university education and becoming a teacher.

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Here are some background stories from our university student interviews in 2019, cont.:

4. Huong:

When the good news broke out that Huong had landed a placement in university, she was simultaneously informed that her father had to go through a heart operation. The worst difficulties fell on her mother's shoulders, since Huong's younger brother was also hospitalized for a seizure disorder. Huong's mother has to work all day to earn money to raise 3 children in school, while supporting the father and brother in the hospital. Well aware of family's difficulties, Huong immediately found a part-time job as a dishwasher after she got to university. Without letting these difficulties get in her way, Huong is positive and determined that she is making the right choice. She has good skills and also the strong will to develop further in the future if AMA supports her.

5. Hien:

Our first impression of Hien is her confidence and strong belief in her ability to become a great teacher. When Hien enrolled in University of Education, many people tried to talk her out of it, including her own teachers at the time who warned her that being a teacher is really difficult with low pay. Her teachers were trying to convince her to take another career path to ensure a stable financial income in the future. But to Hien, she considers a teacher to be someone who inspires her students to achieve incredible things. That's the motivation Hien always has in mind when thinking about what drives her to the career of an educator. Choosing mathematics major, Hien wants to try her best to show her future students not only how beautiful math is as a subject, but also how important it is as a learning tool for human development. There are countless obstacles to overcome in order to be a great math teacher, especially when her parents are not able to financially support her, but Hien really hopes that the AMA scholarship would equip her with more opportunities and pave the road for her success.

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Here are some background stories from our university student interviews in 2019, cont.:

6. Nhi:

Nhi is very impressive. Her family is in a very tough situation. The father is in vegetable state from brain hemorrhage and her mother has to take care of the family, the sick father and help put 3 kids through school. Her mother is a kindergarten teacher and Nhi therefore also wants to become a teacher like her mother. She comes across very mature, articulate, poised and thoughtful. She is very close to her brother and admires the strength of her mom. Before falling sick, her dad used to drink a lot and abused the mother. Nhi was very angry with her dad for a long time, but now she is happy that he is still alive. She feels scared just thinking about his death. She already knows becoming teacher is a tough choice and recently got a tutoring job through a centre (she had to pay them a broker fee of VND 520k or \$22 upfront), but it seems that the client is very demanding and unreasonable. She tutors the 7-Grader in many subjects. No matter what may happen next, she said that she needs to finish this first month of tutoring work in order to get paid the tuition. She still feels optimistic that if she works hard, she will be able to find a job and have a better future. The money from the AMA scholarship will support her studies and help alleviate her difficult situation as a result of poverty.

7. Nhat Anh:

Nhat Anh comes from a very poor family and was inspired by her teacher at school. This teacher kept on teaching her class despite being very pregnant and later suffered a miscarriage. She was completely dedicated to her students. Unfortunately, the teacher and the baby both died from the miscarriage. Nhat Anh really felt the love of her teacher from this incident, and appreciated her sacrifice for the students. She wants to return her teacher's love through teaching her students in the future. It is also her way of showing gratitude to her parents, who have sacrificed so much for her despite being poor. Nhat Anh hopes to receive AMA's support in order to complete her studies and become a teacher.

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Here are some background stories from our university student interviews in 2019, cont.:

8. Minh Thu:

Minh Thu is a smart student majoring in physics. She is the top student of her year in physics right now. Being extremely poor, she has to work 5 days a week as a physics tutor, teaching for 2-3 hours per day at a tutoring center. She only makes a net salary of VND 300k (\$13) per month, while the tutoring center keeps VND 200k. She needs the money to pay partially for her expenses, since her parents cannot afford to help her, and she doesn't want to burden them either. She loves teaching and wants to pursue this career after graduating. Minh Thu is seeking AMA's help so that she can pursue and complete her studies.

9. Linh:

Linh is very passionate about chemistry and wants to become a chemistry teacher. Her mother is a chemistry teacher and so she admires her mother and wants also to follow her footsteps. However, one thing she wants to do better than the mother is to be happier. She mentioned she always sees her mother coming home from teaching and being very grumpy and tired. She understands that teaching can be stressful, but she still wants to pursue the profession. This is also first time in life that she is staying away from home, so she appears a bit stressed and nervous during our interview. When asked if she is a worrisome person, she said "Yes." She told me also that she got cheated by a tutoring centre for VND 400k (\$17) when trying to find a tutoring job recently. When that happened a few months ago, she was shocked and stressed out, while her mother helped by calming her down. She is now trying a new tutoring job again and hopefully will make some money back by the end of this month. She is as passionate about chemistry and teaching as about drawing. Her ability to draw is self-taught, and she does it whenever possible as a form of relaxation. A few pieces of her art were shared with us and they were beautiful. Linh is deserving of AMA's support and will make a great teacher one day for her students.

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Photos of Interviews by AMA in 2019:

