



2016 Top Markets Report **Education** Country Case Study

Vietnam

Vietnam has risen from the 26th position in 2004/05 with 3,670 students sent to the United States to ninth place in 2014/15 with 18,722 students. Over this 10 year period, the number of Vietnamese students increased by 410 percent. This large, steady growth over a decade helps make Vietnam an attractive market for U.S. institutions. These upward growth trends have given little sign of moderating, offering important export opportunities for U.S. colleges and universities.

Overall
Rank

9

The Vietnamese market scores well under the criteria in the ITA methodology in Appendix 1. First, the number of Vietnamese students studying in the United States is relatively large and continues to increase each year, reaching 18,722 in 2014/15. Second, UNESCO reports that in 2013, approximately 53,500 Vietnamese students studied abroad and that the United States has done well in attracting about one-third of all Vietnamese students studying abroad. Third, the growth rate of Vietnamese enrollments has increased steadily. Fourth, the relatively low numbers of students going abroad suggests that there is room to improve U.S. export performance in this market. Fifth, 41.3 percent of the Vietnamese population is 24 years old or younger.¹

Based on recent trends, ITA projects the number of Vietnamese students studying in the United States will climb from 18,722 in 2014/15 to 27,000 in 2019/20, or 42 percent over the next five years.²

Level and Fields of Study for Vietnamese Students

A large majority, 66 percent, of Vietnamese students in the United States are undergraduates. Business and management attract 32.6 percent of Vietnamese students in the United States, making

them the most popular fields of study. The STEM fields are in second place with 28.4 percent of Vietnamese students. The social sciences attract 5.1 percent of students and intensive English attracts 8.6 percent. This strong preference for STEM and business is typical of students from all the leading countries sending students to the United States.³

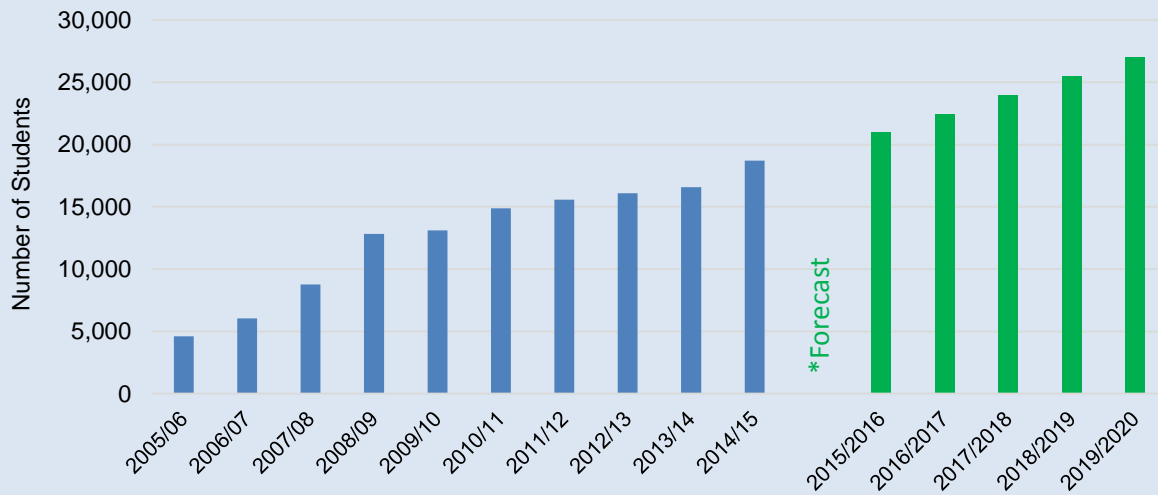
In addition to university study, another potential destination for Vietnamese students is U.S. boarding schools for high school students. The reason is the increasingly popular view that a year or two studying in a U.S. boarding school will facilitate acceptance at a U.S. college or university.

Future Growth/Opportunities

While in the near-term, the number of Vietnamese students is likely to increase, there are several factors to reduce the number of students coming to the United States. The number of Vietnamese students increased over the past 10 years by 410 percent, and the increase from 2013/14 to 2014/15 was 12.9 percent.

Two developments might further slow increases in Vietnamese student enrollment in the United States. First, improving domestic higher education is a top

**Figure 1: Vietnamese Students in the United States
2005-2020***



Source: Historical Data - Institute of International Education. (2015), Open Doors
Forecast: International Trade Administration estimates.

priority for the Vietnamese Government, with the goal of a 10 percent increase in domestic university enrollment. To this end, over the last few years the Vietnamese government has increased budget allocations, liberalized private sector involvement, and encouraged foreign participation in developing education and training services in Vietnam.

Second, other destinations, such as Australia and Singapore, offer proximity, affordable costs, and possible post-graduate employment. The experience of the winner of an award from ITA's MDCP (Market Development Cooperator Program) suggests that success in the Vietnamese market requires a steady, concerted effort over a long period to learn about the market and how to recruit Vietnamese students.⁴

¹ Institute of International Education (IIE), Open Doors Fact Sheet: Vietnam; UNESCO, Global Flow of Tertiary-Level Students, Vietnam at <http://www.uis.unesco.org/Education/Pages/international-student-flow-viz.aspx>

² IIE Open Doors program; Estimate by ITA, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/vm.html>, accessed March 21, 2016.

³ IIE Open Doors, International Students by Place of Origin and Academic Level, 2013/2014 & 2014/2015, and Fields of Study for Selected Places of Origin, 2014/2015

⁴ ITA Global Education Team, Education and Training Services Resource Guide (2016 edition), article on Vietnam, pp. 107 ff.