

Sponsored Student Spotlight: Ha Pham



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Name: Ha Pham

Year in Program: Master of Public Policy, School of Global Policy and Strategy (GPS)

Country: Vietnam **Sponsoring**

Agency: Fulbright Student Program **Field of Study:** Master of Public Policy

Majors and Minors: Energy and Environmental Policy

1. Why did you decide to study in the U.S.? What made you choose to come to San Diego?

The U.S has an excellent reputation for cross-disciplinary graduate program and public policy research on account of its dynamics of politics.

California is considered one of the states leading the charge on curbing climate change, especially promoting renewable energy, in which I have an interest. San Diego is one of the most beautiful and multicultural cities in the U.S. The weather and beaches are wonderful. It is a perfect place for promoting understanding between different countries and cultures. Indeed, I have had the chance to meet people from all continents in the world.

2. How did you become interested in UC San Diego and your program? What do you hope to gain out of your experience here, academically and personally?

The UC San Diego School of Global Policy and Strategy (GPS) came to my attention for its focus on the Asia-Pacific region and the program design, from which I can acquire a profound knowledge of policymaking process and broad-spectrum analytical competency, especially quantitative methods and skills. Needless to say, GPS has leading experts and excellent professors in the field.

3. What challenges/difficulties did you meet while preparing your stay in the U.S. or adapting to your new setting in San Diego? How did you overcome them?

As I recall 2 years ago when I received the admission letter from UC San Diego, I felt nervous about starting a new journey in a country I have never been to before. However, the International Students & Programs Office and my school - GPS - did a great job of preparing students for settling in. I can say I had no issues with my new setting in San Diego.

4. How do you find the academic climate at UC San Diego and within your program? Describe any highlights and/or challenges.

My friends and I have a joke that the quarter system leaves us heart-attack sometimes as if we are running a race with time. The graduate programs at UC San Diego are oftentimes intensive and more advanced than usual. But it is all worth it because we are pushed to reach our fullest potential. Moreover, professors and teaching assistants are always open to our questions and give us as much support as we expect. It seems like there is no reason for us not to perform well. And our efforts never go unnoticed.

5. Do you participate in research? If so, describe your project/lab. Why did you become interested in this topic?

Students at GPS are encouraged to do independent researches on their own topic of interest. As I have a great concern about the social impact of adverse climate variation as well as climate change adaptation, I have been working with 2 professors at GPS to examine the drivers of environmental migration. I am now conducting an analysis of the magnitude and mechanisms of climate impacts on migration.

6. What extracurricular activities do you participate in? Are you a member of any student organizations? What is the best experience you've had so far? How do you spend your free time in San Diego?

I am on the board for the Southeast Asia Link (SEAL) - a student-run organization at GPS. My best experience studying in the U.S was the road trip to Grand Canyon with my friends at GPS. I love the road trip culture in the U.S. Being a graduate student, I can hardly say I have free time. But whenever I can make time for myself I choose to stay tune with nature, such as making a trip to national parks or sowing new seeds in my garden plot in Mesa Nueva.

7. What was a defining moment in your academic career that shaped who you are now?

I don't remember how many times I tell this story but it all started when I applied for a short course in my undergraduate program in Vietnam which was co-taught with Indiana University. The course was a unique opportunity to examine comparative evolution of environmental management and policy in the U.S. and

Vietnam and acted as a catalyst for my choice of professional career involving in policy-making since I learned that the stream and drivers of policy and policy itself were the major key to changes and development of nations. Keeping that in mind, I was determined to engage in the policy-making process and hoped to study in the U.S someday.

8. What have you accomplished during your studies at UC San Diego that you are most proud of? How has this impacted you?

At the end of the first year, I was selected to be one of the 25 Dean's Fellows at GPS to represent the professional qualities of excellence that my school cultivates and honors. This gave me confidence, motivation and courage to continue walking the path I chose.

9. How will your experience here in San Diego fit in your educational/professional plan/future career?

Academically, GPS courses fit my study objectives as they equip me a strong background in policy analysis and public management skills to translate science into policy. Studying at GPS shapes my analysis skills and provides me substantive topical knowledge necessary to be successful in the policy-making process.

10. What is one thing you would tell aspiring sponsored students?

Sponsored students are all here with a good cause. I hope you will take this opportunity to develop yourselves academically and personally, to fulfill your mission, and never let fear and reluctance cloud your aspiration. Make as many friends as you can, listen to their stories, and don't forget to get to the beach.