AmCham Prepare your children for careers that don't exist yet

May 17

Thank you to Jonathan Moreno, Adrian Watts.

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1. **Title slide**

Change happens faster and faster.

When I first came to Ho Chi Minh City 22 years ago, as part of a team that opened the US consulate, I had no idea how far Vietnam would come and how fast.

It swiftly changed from a place where most people rode bicycles, to a dynamic, modern nation fully engaged with and connected to the rest of the world.

Twenty-two years ago, there were fewer than 800 Vietnamese students studying in the United States.

Today, more than 50,000 students from Vietnam are studying at U.S. high schools, colleges and universities.

Even before normalization of diplomatic relations, my alma mater, Harvard University, supported a program for teaching modern economics.

Now there are more than 1300 graduates of the Fulbright Economic Teaching Program, in all of Vietnam's 63 provinces and even in the Politburo.

Since I first came here, more than 1200 Vietnamese students have earned their PhDs in the United States, many of them supported by the Vietnam Education Foundation.

2. **Change slide**

Change is only going to get faster.

This year in Davos,

Alibaba Chairman Jack Ma said, "If we do not change the way we teach, thirty years from now we will be in big trouble."

"Teachers must stop teaching knowledge as they have done for 200 years, and teach something unique, so that a machine can never catch up with us."

He made the argument for teaching the liberal arts, sports, music and painting, so that we teach our students values, independent thinking and teamwork.

To compete successfully in today's world, Vietnam must create a higher education system that promotes more entrepreneurship and innovation.

I think the single smartest investment the United States could make in Vietnam is in education, in the next generation.

No country values education more than Vietnam.

What other country has a thousand-year-old temple dedicated to Literature and to Learning?

3. Fulbright University

I returned to Vietnam after three years as ambassador to work for a Vietnamese educational institution, Fulbright University Vietnam in Ho Chi Minh City.

Because I cannot think of a better or more meaningful way to invest in Vietnam's future.

4. Launching with three multidisciplinary academic initiatives

We are launching with three multidisciplinary academic initiatives:

- **FSPPM, the undergraduate program in the liberal arts, engineering and science, and the Grand Challenges initiative.**

The first, FSPPM, has a Masters in Public Policy program, and carries on a vibrant dialogue with Vietnam's top leaders.

It has a partnership with the Harvard Kennedy School.

5. **Undergraduate program slide**

The undergraduate program is conceived to prepare students for the 21st century.

It focuses on Learning by Doing, on core skills that will be relevant even as jobs change, on 24/7 learning, and on problem-solving in the real world.

During their time at Fulbright, undergraduates will learn broadly and deeply, think critically and creatively, express themselves through the arts, and solve meaningful, real-world questions and problems.

At a conference last week, I heard Nobel Laureate in physics Gerard 't Hooft say, a liberal arts education is instrumental for understanding science.

He should know.

7. **Grand Challenges slide**

- **The third initiative, Grand Challenges, allows graduate and undergrad students and faculty to engage with Vietnam as a living case study.**

It will involve partnerships with like-minded academic institutions, think-tanks, the private sector and governments.

8. **Students**

A few days ago, Fulbright accepted its very first class of undergraduates, 56 young people who are smart, optimistic, hard-working and talented.

At Fulbright, we'll work hard to create for them an extraordinary institution of higher learning, a world-class facility marked by academic freedom, meritocracy, transparency, and equal access.

It will be an institution deeply rooted in Vietnam's rich culture.

We seek nothing less than a game-changer, an innovation university, one that encourages entrepreneurship and boosts Vietnam's economic development.

We intend for it to be an incubator of innovation, of start-ups, and of new industry.

Robots could replace 800 million jobs worldwide by 2030.

Experts say that 85 percent -- or maybe more -- of job transition and loss is due to technology.

So the jobs of the future will be different from the jobs of today.

There will likely be an excess of people with the wrong skill base and a shortage of people with needed skills, such as an understanding of computer science and AI.

We must get away from the rote learning model - fact stuffing - and foster human creativity.

Otherwise, the jobs of those young people graduating today will be displaced.

Employers in the future will need creativity, teamwork and multi-disciplinarity.

So universities must provide cross-curricula project-based models.

That what Fulbright will provide.

And that is the kind of innovation in higher education is needed if Vietnam is going to meet its stated ambition, which is to reach upper-middle income status by 2035.

9. Technology

The change happening in Vietnam is defined by innovation in nearly every single sector and industry, change driven by a population that is young, creative, ambitious, and increasingly voicing a diversity of opinions.

Historically, the United States has been known as the most optimistic and forward-looking nation on earth.

Yet today, surveys show that no nation is more hopeful or confident about the future than Vietnam.

My friend and mentor, Pete Peterson, the first U.S. ambassador to Vietnam, often said that "nothing is impossible in U.S.-Vietnam relations."

He knew, and I know, that neither Americans nor Vietnamese like being told that certain things cannot be done, or that some goals are impossible.

Let's recall the words of the great American world champion boxer, Muhammad Ali.

He said, "Impossible is just a big word thrown around by small men who find it easier to live in the world that they've been given than to explore the power that they have to change it.

Impossible is not a fact," he said. "It's an opinion. Impossible is not a

declaration. It's a dare."

That's the spirit with which Vietnam's young people approach the world.

That's the spirit with which we're creating Fulbright University.

Grand Challenges (for q and a)

can help address the challenges of climate change and sea level rise, the

urgent need to transition to new drivers of economic growth, urban governance, and Vietnam's vulnerability to 21st century threats such as cyber security and pandemics.

At the same time there are also potentially transformative opportunities for Vietnam, ranging from renewable energy, to food production, to the commercial and policy applications of artificial intelligence and machine learning.

Already, Fulbright is the home of the Lower Mekong Public Policy Initiative, because the environmental challenges in the Mekong Delta are especially acute.

Salt water intrusion and the construction of dams along the Mekong contribute to food insecurity, and that is an urgent challenge that Vietnam must address.

Technology will be part of the solution.

Vietnam is poised to make far-reaching decisions about its energy future, and must decide between coal-powered plants and cleaner sources of energy such as natural gas and renewables.

New technologies will be part of the solution.

Universities can do the research that enables decision-makers to choose wisely.

Both our countries are already suffering from the effects of climate change, and it is only going to get worse.

We have storms that are supposed to happen once every 500 years or 1,000 years now happening every year.

New technologies, and innovative universities, will be part of the solution.

Science: creativity needed in the fields of science and technology.

Although I earned a degree at Harvard in the liberal arts, I also learned there that science isn't a set of facts, it's a process.

And it's a very creative process