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Griggs Graduates March into Andrews History

Keri Suarez
Andrews University

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[EDUCATION NEWS]



First Andrews University/Griggs University MBA graduate, Bui Thi Hanh, from Vietnam, receives her diploma from Niels-Erik Andreason, president.

Griggs graduates march into Andrews history

Michigan—On Sunday, July 31, 42 MBA students from Vietnam marched into history at Andrews University, becoming the first graduating class of Griggs University to participate in Andrews University commencement exercises since ownership of Griggs University was transferred to Andrews in November 2010. The students traveled to Berrien Springs, Mich., from Vietnam, where each one is a working professional, to graduate at their American university.

Griggs University dates back to 1909 when Frederick Griggs, an Adventist educator, convinced the Seventh-day Adventist Church's leadership that the church needed a correspondence school "to fill in the gaps that the resident schools could not fill." His vision was to make Adventist education available around the world while still bringing the same quality education to those unable to attend traditional schools.

During the next 100-plus years, 380,000 individuals have obtained a faith-based education through Griggs University. For this most recent gradu-

ating class, their story first begins with the fall of 2007 decision by Griggs University to enter into a partnership with the Center for Educational Technology & Career Development (ETC), an associate organization of the National University of Vietnam in Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City. They began offering both BBAs and MBAs, and classes formally launched in March 2008 making Griggs University the only fully licensed American university to offer an MBA in Vietnam. The very first graduating class from this partnership participated in Commencement exercises at Griggs University's previous location, the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventist headquarters in Silver Spring, Md.

"With Griggs in Maryland, it was definitely a distance education program housed within an office building," says Trinh Phuong Nhi, program coordinator for ETC. "Here, at Andrews, there are students, a library and a busy campus. It makes a big difference in the eyes of our students. We were very excited to hear the good news that Griggs merged with Andrews because not only is Andrews the flagship Seventh-day Adventist university, but it also has a good reputation outside of the Seventh-day Adventist system."

The graduating students represent a wide spectrum of working professionals, from business owners and customs border officers to sales and marketing executives and educators, even medical doctors and securities stock market traders. All are living and working in Vietnam, a nation that has been making headlines as having one of the top ten fastest growing economies in the world.

Hoang Ha, senior sales and marketing director for Yamaha Motor Vietnam, is one of the Griggs University graduates. Ha and his fellow classmates spent two years, meeting for class two days out of the week, working toward their MBA. "It was a great program and was very flexible, which is a great benefit for a working professional." Ha says of his graduation experience,

"Andrews was amazing. I didn't expect it to be so big. Graduation was very emotional for me and unlike anything I've experienced before."

The Griggs/ETC program started with 33 students. In just four years, it has grown to more than 3,000, adding about 100 new students every month. "It's grown so fast!" said Alayne Thorpe, president of Griggs University and dean of the School of Distance Education at Andrews University. "Vietnam is growing at such a rate that they need business leaders to help steer the economy in the right direction. It's a wonderful thing to feel that we've actually made an impact on a country."

With enrollment numbers skyrocketing, some may wonder why the Griggs University program in Vietnam is so successful. Thorpe says, "We have a very good partner in ETC and are affiliated with the National University of Vietnam. They are positioned in the country in a way that they are able to find the very best teachers in the country, and many of them are international business people hailing from places such as the United States, Australia, South Africa and many from Europe, all of whom are in Vietnam, due to the rapid growth of the Vietnamese economy."

The students gather two days a week, studying together in a classroom with live professors. They also benefit from this Web-enhanced program, meaning some course content is delivered online.

It's also a very practical program with appeal to working professionals. "It doesn't teach just theory. It's so much more than that," says Thorpe. "On both sides, we have both said this program is stronger because of the other partner. The more we learn from each other, the more we grow together and the stronger we are."



Keri Suarez, media relations specialist,
Office of Integrated Marketing &
Communication, Andrews University