



## UC San Diego Chancellor's Scholars Program

### Dr. Ruth Covell International Study Award Award Recipient - 2020



**Vince Ly**  
**2018 Cohort**  
**Marshall College**  
**Molecular & Cell Biology**

**Plans to Study Abroad Postponed  
(COVID-19)**

Growing up to immigrant parents within a traditional Vietnamese household, I quickly understood that the American world I lived in was just as foreign to me, as it was to my parents. Being a first-generation student has affected my life in many ways: I was bullied from a young age because of my initially broken English, I quickly learned to fill out more complicated paperwork for my parents, and I became an effective communicator, sometimes repeating what my parents said if the other person was having trouble understanding. Most importantly, my identity as a first-generation student makes it difficult for me to ask my parents for guidance in college matters, such as study abroad. Because I am also low-income, I know that I must work hard to qualify for scholarships so that I may fund my education abroad. Similarly, had I not received the Chancellor's Scholarship from UCSD, I would be at a community college simply because of financial burden. These constructs work together to build my identity: I am hesitant, I am scared, but I am also persevering.

During the winter break of my second year, I had the opportunity to visit Vietnam for the first time. I was able to talk to many locals, ranging from hard laborers to medical students specializing in gastrointestinal surgery. I discovered that there exists a great discrepancy in Vietnam: many of the citizens in Vietnam are unable to afford the expenses of proper healthcare and as a result are left untreated. Unfortunately, there is an inadequate amount of doctors, meaning that the majority of the Vietnamese population typically resorts to home remedies and religious practices to combat their health issues. More often than not, their illnesses are ignored. This phenomenon, coupled with the poor sanitation practices that often come as byproducts of economically-deprived countries, inevitably leads to rampant spread of disease.

Next summer I will be conducting research in Okada Lab at Osaka University, studying Systems Biology with an emphasis on cancer, immunology, and inflammation—the crux of human disease. During my time abroad, I hope to improve my communication skills as communication is more important than ever in the field of research. I also hope that my time researching this fascinating topic abroad will give new insights into preventative healthcare methods that will advance containment of widespread diseases and promote improved health globally.

In the future, I hope to apply to graduate school for research in the field of pathology, because I believe it holds the greatest potential for influencing global change with regards to providing basic healthcare to disadvantaged countries. I am also passionate about this issue, because my own father was born into poverty in Vietnam. Had he not immigrated to America, I would be there now. My dream is to address this growing global issue with my research in the future so that I may help the Vietnamese community, as well as other countries which share a similar story.

Chancellor's Scholar's Program/Emeriti Mentor Program  
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