



Annual Report

2019-2020



From the Executive Director

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It has been over a year since COVID-19 has disrupted our lives. All of us had to make adjustments to our daily routines and have been affected socially, economically, emotionally, and psychologically. I sincerely hope that you are staying safe and doing well during these trying times.

We have also witnessed increased conflicts here in the United States as well as in various parts of the world during this past year. In particular, the February coup in Myanmar and ensuing violence against civilians that has been affecting our alumni, friends, and partners there truly breaks my heart. It is my earnest hope that peace will be restored in Myanmar and that we will be able to see once again peaceful scenes like the one depicted in the cover photo soon.

During this pandemic, we have been able to be creative and offer our programs in the virtual space, giving participants from Asia and the US opportunities to interact cross-culturally and inspire each other to bring positive social change to the world. Additionally, we are also creating a space where people in our community can come together to discuss topics that we deeply care about. Topics we covered last year include anti-Asian bias and racial inequities highlighted by the pandemic in the US, which are featured on page 4 of this report. Through our programs and events, we hope to raise awareness about such issues and share ideas for participants and members of our community to engage and take action towards social justice.

These activities have been made possible largely due to the kindness of our supporters. I would like to take this opportunity to express my deep gratitude to all our donors, funders, alumni, and friends who support VIA. Your generosity enables us to continue our work. We remain committed to fostering cross-cultural empathy and building meaningful learning and engagement opportunities for current and future members of the VIA community.

May, 2021



Kazutoh Ishida, PhD
Executive Director



VIA Around the World



- 10** GLOBAL COMMUNITY FELLOWS
- 63** PARTICIPANTS IN ASIA
- 238** PARTICIPANTS IN SILICON VALLEY
- 29** COORDINATORS, SEASONAL STAFF, & ADVISORS

- 4** PROGRAMS IN ASIA
- 14** PROGRAMS IN SILICON VALLEY
- 6** VIRTUAL ACCELERATOR TEAMS



ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT

Anna Kokubu is an alumna of VIA's 2017 Medical Exchange and Discovery (MED) program. She has since returned to VIA twice as a Fellow to support our Exploring Health Care (EHC) program, once in 2018 and most recently in March 2021 virtually. Anna also worked with four other VIA alumni on a project called "Do Our Bit" that aimed to promote critical thinking about the COVID-19 pandemic among undergraduate and graduate students. Anna is currently in her sixth and final year of medical school at Kobe University in Japan. Program Director Lina Yamashita recently had a chance to ask Anna to reflect on how her experiences with VIA have shaped her both personally and professionally.

"I've always been interested in leadership, in how people lead and inspire others. As a participant, I was curious about how the staff team worked together and what the different strategies are for facilitating discussions."

With two fellowship experiences under her belt, Anna has now gained greater confidence with enabling others to act and encouraging the heart -- both of which are core leadership practices in the Leadership Challenge framework that VIA uses. "I had never thought about



how I can actually enable and encourage others to step outside their comfort zones [prior to becoming a Fellow]. I was never challenged in this way before. I realized that simply saying, 'You can do it!' was not enough. I had to experiment with different ways of encouraging participants to ask questions and share their ideas, depending on their backgrounds, personalities, goals, and needs."

Knowing that the willingness to develop and try new ideas was key to being a successful Fellow, Anna found it easier the second time around. "I had a lot of ideas in my back pocket. The online setting was challenging, but because

continued on the next page

Alumni Spotlight (cont'd)

of my prior experience as a Fellow, I was able to anticipate some of the challenges of facilitating discussions. It was sometimes challenging to find solutions, but I could more easily come up with different ideas if certain strategies didn't work."

Reflecting on the participants that she got to work with, Anna was moved by how they challenged themselves to ask questions and share opinions in English. Seeing their bravery has reinforced Anna's desire to be the kind of person who empowers others to step outside their comfort zones. "I want to become a person who can inspire others, especially high school students, undergraduates,

and medical school students to try something new. So many activities for students are all laid out, and there's a lot of following that happens. I want to be someone who promotes doing something different."

Anna was also inspired by the power of a collaborative, team-based approach in creating a supportive learning environment for participants. "I always felt supported by the staff team, so I could ask anyone for help at any time." As an EHC staff member, Anna gained confidence in contributing different ideas, raising questions, and supporting her team members in service of the greater cause of providing a valuable learning experience for the EHC participants.

While she was initially prepared to feel frustrated about working across different time zones, she has now realized that team chemistry can be built virtually and feels ever more hopeful about online team efforts.

And, as a soon-to-be physician, Anna wants to draw on the lessons she learned through her fellowship experiences. "I will be challenged to respond in the moment when I interact with patients and their families. As a Fellow, I learned to constantly experiment and try different strategies for responding to the needs of participants and ask for support from the team. This type of forward-thinking, proactive mentality is something that I'd like to embrace as a future doctor."

VIA Chat: A Space for Caring

Shortly after COVID-19 hit in 2020, we launched VIA Chat, an event series that brings together our alumni and friends to discuss topics that VIA cares about. Facilitated by VIA staff Yuki Ueda and Melissa Paschuck, our first VIA Chat session addressed the issue of Anti-Asian bias in the wake of COVID-19. Capitalizing on our expertise in the art of convening, our ever-increasing skills in online facilitation, and, most importantly, the wisdom and experience of the VIA community, we created a space for others to be heard and listened to. In small groups, we had a chance to discuss the following four questions:

What types of anti-Asian bias or harassment have you seen, heard about, or experienced in your communities since COVID-19?

What are the ways, if any, that your communities are addressing these causes of racial bias?

What are some challenges that make it difficult to address racial bias?

Within your "circles of influence" how might you address anti-Asian bias?

We shared the results of this discussion on our blog, including action steps for VIA to reflect on its own values and commitment to Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI), and resources for combating racially biased behavior and harassment.



In June 2020, VIA's medical programs alumni Yuka Matsuzaki, Shiichi Ihara, and Seiichi Hayashi organized a VIA Chat session focusing on impacts of COVID-19 in Japan and the US. VIA medical programs advisor Dr. Takayuki Oshimi and VIA Executive Director Kazutoh Ishida shared updates from Japan and the US respectively and answered questions from the audience about COVID's impact on our daily lives, education, and the health care system. Kazutoh also discussed how the pandemic is highlighting racial inequities in the US and shared how people are taking action to address racism through the Black Lives Matter movement.

The best thing about VIA has always been the empathetic and caring people that make up our community. VIA alumni Sarah Whitmore, Laura Galang, Carrie Soo Hoo, Hannah Sorenson, and Sergius Santos have generously volunteered to continue our initiative through a newly branded VIA Cares discussion series which will be launched in spring 2021. We hope you will join us and engage in meaningful conversations around topics that we care deeply about.

Global Community Fellowship (GCF) Program

Ibrahim Bharmal

Jember University
Jember, Indonesia



Lua Xuan Doan

Coins for Change
Hanoi, Vietnam



Carrie Soo Hoo

Inle Heritage Hospitality
Vocational Training Center
Inle Lake, Myanmar



"I am constantly humbled and inspired by the VIA community and feel grateful to have been part of GCF. The fellowship taught me what sustainable change looks like and connected me to some of the most resilient individuals I know. It is one of those experiences I will continue to learn from in years to come."

Emily Stephenson

Connect
Yangon, Myanmar



Sophie Wang

KoeKoe Tech
Yangon, Myanmar



Jamie-Claire Chau

Coins for Change
Hanoi, Vietnam



Laura Galang

Universitas Gadjah Mada (UGM)
Yogyakarta, Indonesia

"This fellowship has shown me that something beautiful happens at the crossroads of empathy and collaboration. I am so grateful to VIA and UGM for sharing their stories, spaces, and perspectives. Through GCF, I have learned what it means to be a changemaker rooted in community."



Hannah Sorenson

Jember University
Jember, Indonesia

"My GCF experience showed me that something incredible happens when human connection is rooted in intentionality. The ways we communicate with each other, collaborate, and process our own experiences shift when we place care and consciousness into the relationships we build."



Tanmai Vemulapalli

Pre-Collegiate Program (PCP)
Yangon, Myanmar

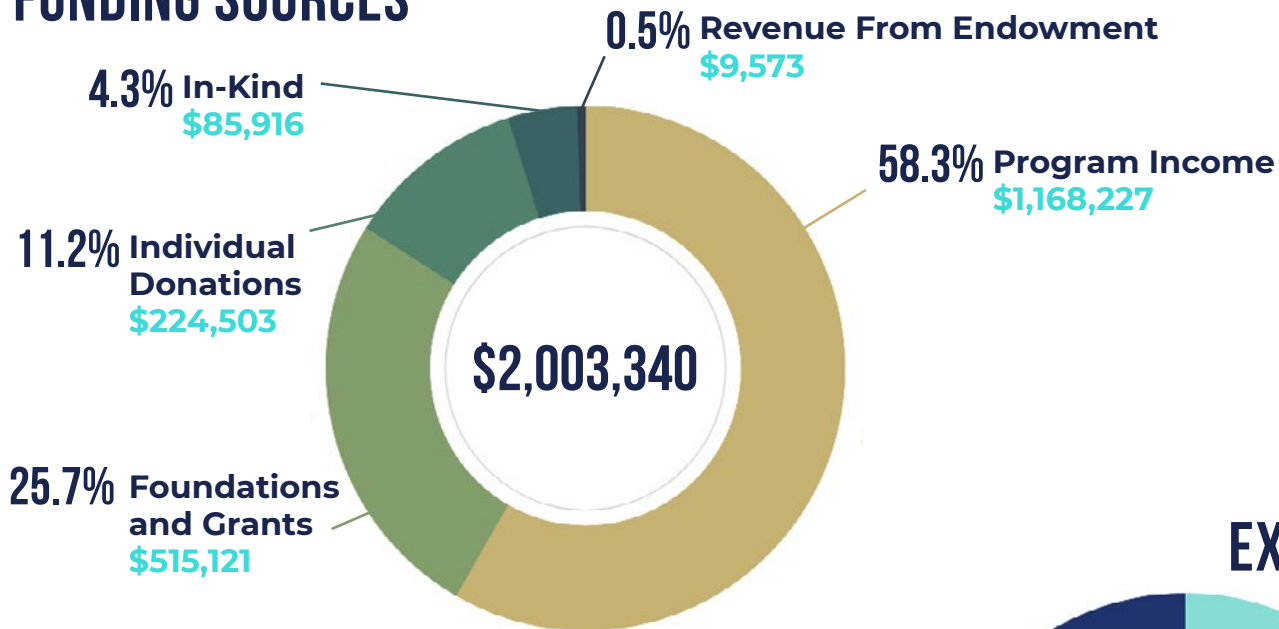


Lulu Zhou

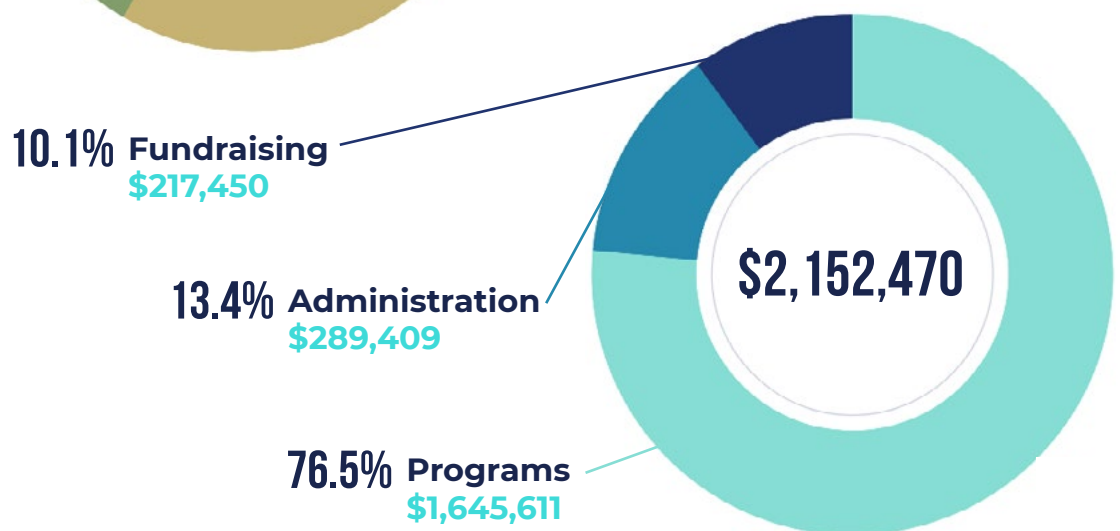
BEAM (Bridging Educational
Access to Migrants)
Chiang Mai, Thailand

2019–2020 By The Numbers

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EXPENSES



Leaving a Legacy for VIA

We would like to thank and honor all of those who have made a legacy gift promise to VIA. Their commitment will ensure the continuation of rich, immersive cross-cultural learning experiences that transform lives and strengthen our global community.

John Affeldt & Karen Hoy

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Dwight Clark

Tim & Mia Clark

Joan Karlin & Paul Resnick

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Michael Moradzadeh

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If you have included VIA in your will or trust, please inform us so that we can thank you for your special commitment. For additional information about our program, please contact Kazutoh Ishida at: kazutoh@viaprograms.org or (415) 904-8033.

Contributors

July 1, 2019 - June 30, 2020

Your contributions add miles to each participant's journey. For that, we thank you.

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Palo Alto, CA 94302
415-904-8033
www.viaprograms.org