



Annual Report

2020-2021



From the Executive Director

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While the past two years with COVID have certainly been challenging for all of us, it appears that we are starting to see the light at the end of this dark tunnel. I cannot be more grateful for our dedicated staff and board members who have been patient and resilient as we have navigated the uncharted waters of the pandemic. I must also sincerely thank all our donors, funders, alumni, and friends who support VIA and enable us to continue our work.

After evacuating our Global Community Fellows from Asia in March 2020 and operating in the virtual space during the pandemic, I am excited to share that we have started to plan in-person programs again. In fact, we just recently had a VIA Fellow, Betty Nguyen, head out to Japan in April. Betty is working with one of VIA's newest partners, Shonan Shijuku in Osaka Prefecture, to support youth social impact leadership and community development activities. We are also in conversations with other partners listed on p.5 of this report with hopes to send more VIA Fellows to Asia later this summer. Additionally, we have plans to invite participants back to Silicon Valley, starting with a program in June for young leaders from Central Asia.

As we engage in program preparations and as I see disheartening and frightful news come out from different parts of the world, including Myanmar and Ukraine, I am once again reminded of the importance of the work we do. What gives me hope is seeing recent program participants taking their first steps as social impact leaders addressing various challenges in their communities and engaging with the warm and empathetic people in our network who are doing good in the world. It is an honor and privilege to be part of this community and I remain committed to fostering cross-cultural empathy and building meaningful learning opportunities for aspiring social impact leaders.

May 2022

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Kazutoh Ishida".

Kazutoh Ishida, PhD
Executive Director

Celebrating 25 Years of Exploring Health Across Culture

This retrospective of VIA's health care programs was researched, compiled, and written by Assistant Program Director Hinda Majri, who has supported the health care programs since 2021.

In the past 25 years, over 800 university students studying in various health care fields in mainland China, Japan, Taiwan, Myanmar, and other regions have joined VIA's health care programs to discover new perspectives and explore new insights on medicine and its practice in the United States and Asia. Through program activities in the Bay Area, participants not only get to explore hospitals, clinics, and medical schools but also have more hands-on opportunities such as physician shadowing and volunteering in senior centers.

<<The value of VIA's health care programs is not only in the exchange of ideas and knowledge but also in the impact it has on personal lives. Through reflections, participants learn more about themselves and their place in the world and what kind of health care provider they want to be.

Health Care Programs 25 Year Anniversary Survey

In August of 2021, VIA sent out a survey to all health care program alumni, former staff, fellows, and advisors, to collect reflections and updates from the community. The survey demographics and responses reflected the essence of the health care programs' objectives.

Of the 40 individuals who responded, 53% had joined as participants, 29% as fellows, 8% as seasonal staff and faculty



advisors, and an additional 10% are affiliated in another capacity. A quarter of respondents joined programs as participants and subsequently as fellows. Respondents represented a variety of fields, both medical and non-medical, such as general practice, emergency medicine, public health, and research.

Sifting through the thoughtful survey responses highlighted the impact the health care programs have had on all of the participants' professional development as well as personal growth.

ABCO. Active. Brave. Curious. Open-minded.

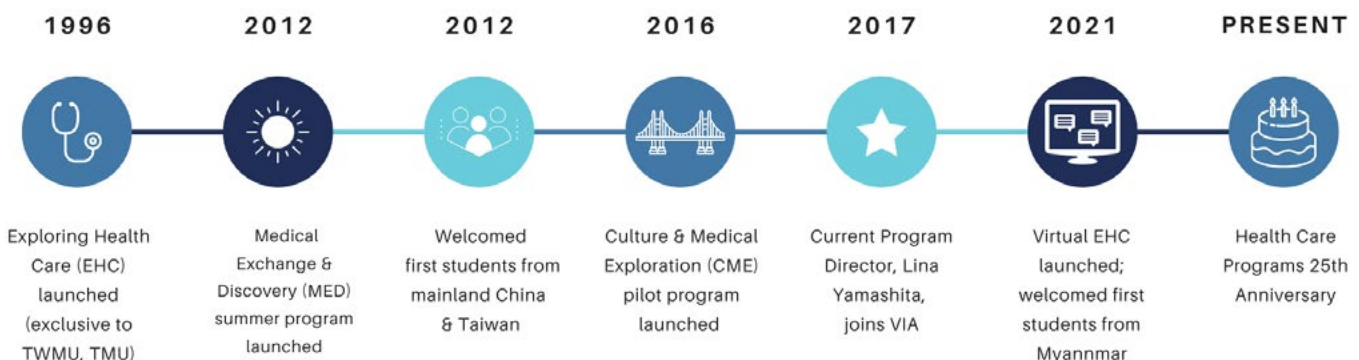
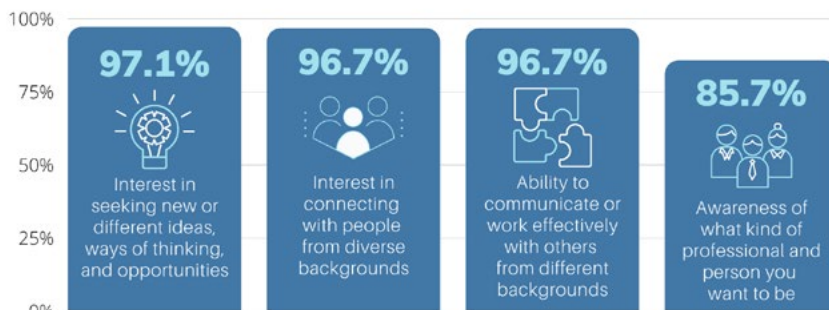
Many alumni notably credit the programs for pushing them out of their comfort zone, and sometimes even being challenged and teaching them to be courageous and open-minded. Program Director Lina Yamashita introduces the acronym ABCO at the beginning of each program to encourage participants to be active, brave, curious, and open-minded.

Chao Christina Wang (Medical Exchange & Discovery (MED) 2015 Participant) shared, "I forced myself to raise my hand to be the first one to answer/ask questions, share reflections and give feedback...gradually I found it not that scary to play a more active role in activities and I was not as bad as I imagined. The experience is still encouraging and motivates me to be a better self and try not to worry if it is not perfect."

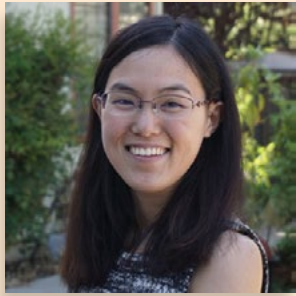
Yuki Horiuchi (Exploring Health Care (EHC) Summer 2021 Participant) shared, "I achieved my goal that I was more active, brave, and curious. For example, I asked many deep questions to panelists and improved my knowledge about differences between medicine in the US and that in Japanese."

PARTICIPANT LEARNING OUTCOMES

Percentage of respondents who indicated moderate to significant change in intended learning outcomes



Program Director Spotlight



Lina Yamashita's experience working on the health care programs over the last four and a half years taught her to be more authentic to herself. "After MED 2018, I had gained enough confidence to make more substantial logistical and curricular changes, including placing more of an

emphasis on disparities in health and health care." She also emphasized her appreciation for collaboration and staying open, pointing out the importance and value of feedback, ideas, and perspectives from advisors, partners, and alumni.

Lina also shared her newly gained appreciation for the importance of facilitating non-program-related activities. "Before coming to VIA, I had little experience facilitating team-building but now that I've had the pleasure of leading nine teams, I've especially come to realize the importance of setting aside time and space for icebreakers, energizers, one-on-one chats, socializing, and hands-

on activities not directly related to the program topics."

Most importantly, Lina credits VIA for making her more flexible and adaptive. "I've learned to respond to changes small and large, whether coming up with alternative activities, rearranging an entire program schedule due to an airline strike, or developing a virtual program." Her time at VIA has also taught her to not over-plan. "While VIA hasn't changed the fact that I am a planner, I have actually come to prefer to not over-plan as I used to. I've come to trust my instincts in the moment and say or do things depending on the particular context or circumstance."



Saki Suzuki (right) waits for EHC 2014 participants to arrive at San Francisco International Airport with other program staff.

Alumni Spotlight

Saki Suzuki, EHC 2012 program participant and 2014 Global Health Fellow alumna from Japan, described how Dr. Oshimi from the International University of Health and Welfare who has served as faculty advisor for VIA's health care programs since 2012,

recommended the Exploring Health Care program to her. She saw a rare opportunity to travel abroad and improve her English skills while increasing her knowledge and perspective as a medical student. After graduating from medical school, Saki became a cardiovascular surgeon. She has since transitioned her career to medical education and became a faculty member at Nihon University School of Medicine (NUSM) last year.

Saki described how she enjoyed interacting with the EHC members so much that she wanted to be more involved in EHC activities. This prompted her to apply for the Global Health Fellowship, which was established for the first time in 2014 as a role for program alumni to return and mentor new participants while continuing to build their professional and cross-cultural competencies.

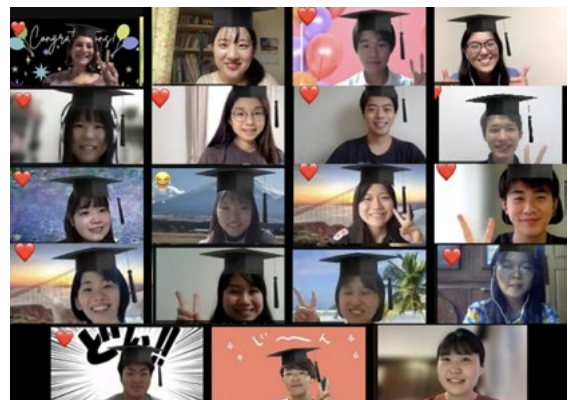
One of the biggest rewards Saki gained from her EHC experience was to be able to support and mentor first-time participants by using her own past experience. She also acknowledged the improvement of her English when participating the second time, increasing her courage and confidence in speaking English without hesitation. Her experience still impacts her today in her new position as a specialist in medical education where she is involved in medical English classes in collaboration with English instructors.

Looking Forward

Over the last two and a half decades, VIA's health care programs have evolved to reflect and engage with current social issues and challenges. In recent years, health care disparities have been a very important topic, particularly taking center stage during the current pandemic. As VIA always encourages participants to see current challenges and world events as an opportunity to learn, the health care programs will continue to adapt to future challenges, keeping minds open, and facilitating more collaboration to continue the growth and expansion of individual medical professionals and the program itself.

Lina enthusiastically highlighted the importance of continuing to use current issues as a way to develop the curriculum. Climate change and digital health are a few topics that could be further explored in the years to come. The recent pandemic also highlighted the need to keep addressing health disparities, as well as the need to explore the importance of patient-doctor relationships.

2021 was the first year that VIA offered the EHC program virtually. While originally a necessity due to the pandemic travel restrictions, this opportunity made it possible for those who may not have otherwise been able to join an in-person program to gain knowledge and skills alongside like-minded young medical professionals from across Asia. Virtual programs have made the VIA health care programs more accessible and affordable and worth exploring their expansion in the future.



GCF Partner Spotlight

The global pandemic forced us to halt all in-person programs in 2020 and quickly withdraw our Global Community Fellows (GCF) who were working with our partners in Asia. Although pausing the program was a difficult decision, it gave us the opportunity to assess and refresh the program design to bring it into alignment with our strategic plan. Current and future GCF posts will place greater emphasis on collaboration with partner institutions to empower aspiring social impact leaders to create positive change in their communities. As we prepare to resume the GCF program, we would like to thank our wonderful partners and highlight some of them here.

Universitas Gadjah Mada (UGM)

Universitas Gadjah Mada is one of the oldest and most prestigious universities in Indonesia, located at the Bulaksumur Yogyakarta Campus. Over the last decade, VIA and UGM have worked in close collaboration to support the English Department by working with their Vocational College where students focus on job-specific training and areas of study. VIA fellows have worked with students on their speaking skills as well as led courses on cross-cultural understanding. In the past, VIA fellows have collaborated with university students and lecturers on activities outside of their courses.



BEAM Education Foundation

Bridging Educational Access to Migrants (BEAM) is a non-profit educational foundation that emerged in Chiang Mai, Thailand as a response to the needs of migrant and refugee youth living in Thailand, most of whom come from Myanmar. They are dedicated to supporting local, people-oriented communities in Myanmar and Thailand through access to comprehensive educational opportunities. They offer several programs, including the Youth Community Exchange Program (YCEP), which was established in 2009 to support BEAM's efforts toward community empowerment and cross-cultural understanding. YCEP offers three language programs, a youth conference, and works closely with the Thai government to identify legal pathways for migrant youth education. We have enjoyed our collaboration with BEAM since 2015 and look forward to seeing a VIA fellow join them in the summer.



Avia Travel Closes Its Doors

Many years after most small independent travel agencies have disappeared, Avia Travel only recently closed its doors with the retirement of **Sue Lai**, who has attracted a legion of satisfied travelers with her deep knowledge of Asia.



Avia—originally VIA's in-house travel desk which convinced an Asian airline wholesaler to work with it and thus offer VIA significant airfare savings—has gone through several life-changes in its almost forty years.

As a tiny shop in Palo Alto which offered Stanford faculty and students similar low fares, Avia merged in the 1990s with a new agency started by Sue. Her professionalism and deep knowledge of the region attracted not only serious individual travelers but a number of educational and non-profit organizations offering meaningful programs, including VIA's alumni trips. "When [VIA] knew of people going to Asia they would point them to AVIA Travel," said VIA Founder Dwight Clark.

VIA remains immensely grateful for the support and expertise that Avia, under Sue Lai's leadership, has provided its programs, staff and alumni.

Words from Sue Lai

My family and I sincerely thank the VIA community for your support, unfailing courtesy and the opportunity as these were instrumental in the sustainability of Avia Travel especially in the early years.



Shonan Shijuku

Shonan Shijuku is a community organization that was launched in 2010 and incorporated by the current mayor of the City of Izumi Otsu in Osaka Prefecture in 2016. As an organization, Shonan Shijuku strives to nurture future social impact leaders who can contribute to their community and beyond. They provide educational programs and opportunities, support youth in entrepreneurship, hold sessions that encourage self-expression for students and children, and connect foreigners studying at a Japanese school in their city to people in their local community. We are excited to send the first VIA fellow to Shonan Shijuku this spring to support educational programming for student groups and community members in Izumi Otsu.



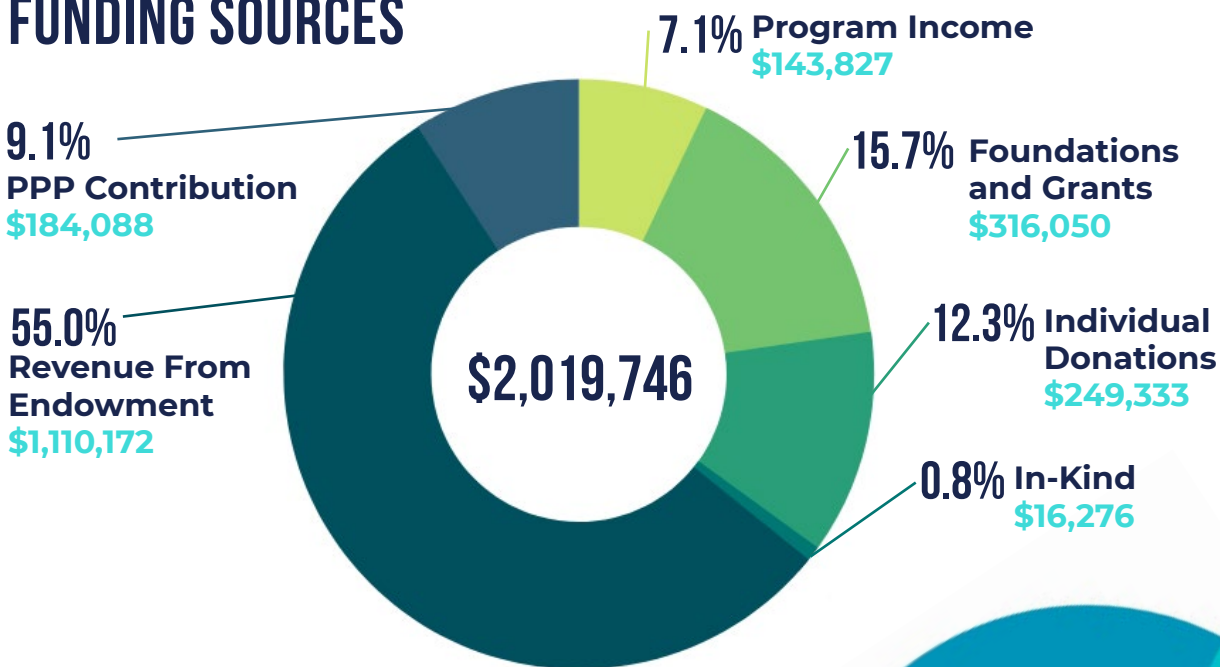
Parami University

We are excited to welcome Parami University as VIA's newest partner of the GCF program with plans to place two fellows starting this summer. Parami University was founded in early 2017 and quickly evolved into a high-quality, liberal arts university in Myanmar that operates two learning institutions and one research center: the Parami Institute of Undergraduate Studies, the Parami Institute for Continuing Education, and the Center for Education Policy Research. As a higher learning institution, Parami strives to cultivate future leaders and global citizens by nurturing critical thinking, inspiring leadership, and compassionate service. In this partnership with Parami, Global Community Fellows will work closely with the Academic Affairs Department to provide advising support and tutoring to undergraduate students starting this summer.

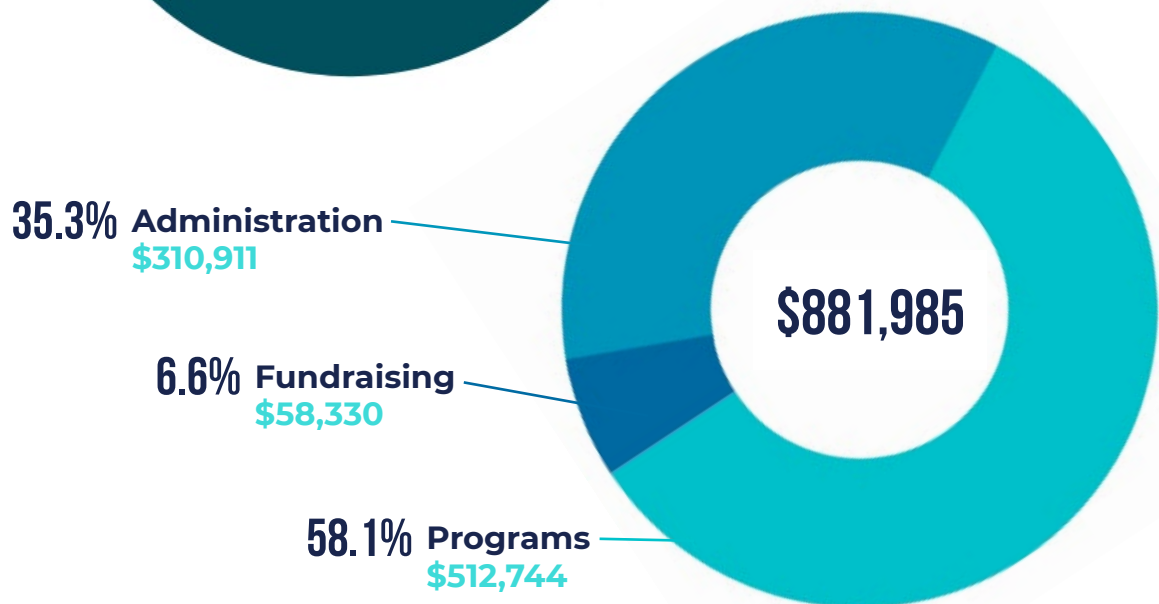


2020–2021 By The Numbers

FUNDING SOURCES



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

Jeanne Blamey & Robert Fram

Dwight Clark

Tim & Mia Clark

Brooke Isham

Joan Karlin & Paul Resnick

Stephen McNeil

Michael Moradzadeh

Corbin Smith

Joel Stratte-McClure

Robert Textor

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, 2020 - June 30, 2021

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Andy & Holly Cohen

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

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