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Department of Behavioral Sciences
and Health Education

October 22, 2020

Dear Review Committee for the Mary K. Beyrer Scholarship:

I am writing on behalf of Ms. Ha Ngan (Milkie) Vu who is applying for the Mary K. Beyrer Scholarship and would like to offer my full support for her application. I have known Ms. Vu as her dissertation co-chair, advisor on her research projects, and as a professor of the Health Promotion Interventions course in our Behavioral Sciences and Health Education doctoral program at Emory. I can speak to her outstanding academic credentials, the scientific merit of her proposed research project, and her potential of becoming an academic researcher.

Ms. Vu is currently in candidacy and working on her dissertation, which is also her proposed project for the SOPHE Student Fellowship in Patient Engagement. Ms. Vu came to Emory University on the strength of stellar academic records at Duke University and the University of Chicago. She has continued to excel in her PhD program with a GPA of 3.98 to date. She has been selected for over twenty honors and awards from her undergraduate and graduate institutions, including the merit-based Laney Graduate School Fellowship from Emory. She has been recognized by professional organizations, winning several scholarships and awards from the American Association for Cancer Research, the American Association for Cancer Education, the Society of Public Health Education, the Society of Behavioral Medicine, and the Interdisciplinary Association for Population Health Science. Recently, she was granted the prestigious and extremely competitive F31 National Service Research Award from the National Cancer Institute at the National Institutes of Health.

Ms. Vu possesses enormous potential as a researcher in the areas of cancer health disparities and minority health. Her previous Master's level training in Social Sciences and Anthropology uniquely positions her with strong qualitative research skills. Her doctoral-level coursework at Emory University gives her training in behavioral science theories, health promotion interventions, and advanced quantitative data analysis. To date, Ms. Vu has had 33 published peer-reviewed manuscripts and another six under review. She is the first author on 12 of these 39 manuscripts. Her research productivity and achievements are undoubtedly among the top for PhD students that have gone through our program.

Ms. Vu has also had a long and engaged history of collaborating with community stakeholders and organizations on health issues of minority communities. During her Master's program, she conducted her Master's thesis project using ethnographic methods and interviews to examine food-related behaviors and notions of community belonging among Vietnamese-Americans. She also worked as a research assistant on a project investigating mental health service utilization among Asian immigrants in Chicago, where she liaised with community-based organizations for study recruitment and conducted focus groups with Vietnamese adults on mental health stigma and help-seeking. After completing her Master's degree, she worked as a research specialist at the University of Chicago Medical Center, where she managed an intervention to improve mammography utilization among Muslim women in Chicago. She played several key leadership roles, particularly in conducting interviews, analyzing surveys, designing measures for outcome evaluation, and constructing health education materials. She also published several peer-reviewed manuscripts from her work on the intervention, both as first-authors and co-authors, in prominent journals such as *Social Science & Medicine* and *Journal of Women's Health*.

Knowing Ms. Vu's interests in community-engaged health research, since her arrival at Emory University, she and I have been collaborating on research projects focused on health of immigrants and refugees. I have introduced her to community organizations (e.g., the Center for Pan Asian Community Services, Boat People-SOS) that serve Asian and racial/ethnic minority populations in Atlanta. Ms. Vu has actively forged collaborations with these organizations and others and carried out several research projects. I have advised Ms. Vu on her several research projects on tobacco use of immigrants and on sexual and reproductive health of refugee women in Atlanta. These projects provide valuable data on health issues of immigrants and refugees in the region and help improve and inform health program and services delivery. Ms. Vu is also actively engaged in disseminating her findings to inform future research and practice; to date, she and I

have co-authored three manuscripts from her data with community partners, published and in press at *Journal of Immigrant and Minority Health*, *Translational Behavioral Medicine*, and *Journal of Community Health*.

Ms. Vu and I have also worked on HPV vaccination research, which is foundational to her dissertation. We have collaborated on three manuscripts related to HPV vaccination, which have been published in *Vaccine* and *Health Education Research*. Ms. Vu is the first author on both papers and led the analysis and writing. Her research findings from these manuscripts have important implications for both researchers and practitioners; indeed, the Toronto Star has featured one of these manuscripts in a recent article about the lack of systems to track vaccinations in Ontario (<https://www.thestar.com/news/investigations/2019/03/15/ontario-failed-to-build-a-reliable-vaccination-tracking-system-and-for-now-uses-the-honour-system-star-investigation-finds.html>).

Ms. Vu's proposed project will examine U.S. Vietnamese parents' HPV vaccine uptake for their adolescent children. I have found her research plan to be of extremely high quality. I have advised her on the development of her research project and believe she will make unique and significant contributions regarding health system- and individual-level factors impacting HPV vaccine uptake of a high-risk understudied minority group, Vietnamese in the U.S. This research proposal will also help her gain valuable experience working with diverse community stakeholders and will cultivate relationships with community organizations serving Vietnamese in the U.S., all of which are fundamental to her career. The experience of conducting this project will help her transition well to her postdoctoral training phase, where she plans to focus on intervention development on HPV vaccine uptake and cancer prevention practices among immigrants, refugees, and other minority communities in the U.S. The Mary K. Beyrer Scholarship is an important support for costs related to her dissertation research and will ensure the success of her project.

I will advise Ms. Vu on her research project as a member of her dissertation committee. I have over 23 years of experience in behavioral sciences and health promotion research. My research expertise focuses on cancer prevention and control, health promotion, and implementation science. I have received funding from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Cancer Institute, American Cancer Society, and other foundations. I have studied prevention behaviors among minority and underserved populations in Georgia through research projects under the Emory Prevention Research Center. Through biweekly meetings with Ms. Vu and her dissertation committee, I will advise Ms. Vu on study design, recruitment, and data analysis for her research project.

In addition to her research, Ms. Vu is also dedicated to teaching and services in the health promotion and health education field. She has served as a teaching assistant and associate for three MPH-level courses at Rollins School of Public Health and mentored several MPH students on their theses. Over this past year, she also worked as an evaluator for the Office of Evidence-Based Learning at Emory University and conducted focus groups and interviews to assess the implementation and outcomes of residential and hybrid/online course modalities in public health for MPH students. Moreover, Ms. Vu has served as reviewers for multiple journals and conferences. She also volunteered for abstract selection subcommittee and session moderator services for conferences such as *Society of Behavioral Medicine* and *International Cancer Education Conference*.

I confirm that Ms. Vu meets all requirements for the scholarship application, including 1) being enrolled full-time in a doctoral program; 2) having a 3.98 GPA; and 3) majoring in Behavioral, Social, and Health Education Sciences. I am delighted to give my full support for Ms. Vu's application. She is a promising and dedicated researcher who makes great impact in the field of minority health, cancer prevention and control, and health disparities. Please do not hesitate to contact me at cescoff@emory.edu with any question.

Sincerely,



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