

First Place Winner, Viet Le, Brings fame to UH

Mr. My Viet Le, a fourth year Chinese Studies major, has won the First Place prize in an international tournament of Chinese language and culture competition in Beijing in August, 2015. The competition was sponsored by the Chinese Ministry of Education via the headquarters of the Confucius Institutes in China. Viet also received the People's Champion Reward from the competition. The 1st place honor will give him a 3 year full scholarship to study in China. He will use this scholarship to pursue his master's degree. My Viet Le has already received a scholarship to study in Beijing for a year starting this September.

The competition is highly competitive with a long process. Viet Le was recommended by the Chinese Studies Program in the department of Modern and Classical Languages to represent the UH in March 2015. He then won First Place in the Southern Region of USA in April. He was strongly recommended by the Consulate General of PRC in Houston to Beijing where he competed with 133 contestants from 97 countries, who were all first place winners of their respective countries and regions.

First, My Viet Le had completed four round competitions to qualify for a semi-final. The first involved a computerized test. The second was a talent show in which Viet performed on piano and sang a Chinese song. The third included a public Chinese speech, and the fourth included an extensive question and answer session. Winning one competition after another, Viet was qualified for the top 30 worldwide to advance to the semi-finals. The 30 semi-finalists were required to perform in reality shows in several Chinese cities, which were broadcasted live in national TV programs. Chinese TV viewers were encouraged to vote for winners. After a month long competition, Viet was voted as the most popular winner in addition to the prize of First Place for his language speech and cultural knowledge, as well as talent shows from the judge committee.

Viet is the second winner of the International Tournament of Chinese Language Bridge Competition in China. Ten years ago, a Chinese Studies Minor, Brain Pawlik, won the Championship of the same competition. In the past ten years, more than 50 Chinese Studies majors and minors have won competitions in Chinese language speech, singing, and martial arts at local, national, and international levels. Many have received scholarships to study in China or Taiwan via the Chinese Studies Program. More than 100 Chinese majors and minors have won academic scholarships thanks to the generous donors to the Chinese Studies Program.

The Chinese Studies Program has been developing rapidly to meet increasing demands from students for Chinese language courses, the Chinese Studies BA degree, and the minor in Chinese Studies. Graduates with a BA degree in Chinese Studies can easily find a job in China or in the US. Some of the graduates went to China and Taiwan to teach English in public and private educational institutions. Others worked in consulting firms in China, and still others developed their own companies and business firms in Beijing and Shanghai.

In addition, the Chinese Studies Program in MCL also offers a Master's degree: World Cultures and Literatures with a concentration on Chinese Studies. There has been a severe shortage of qualified Chinese language teachers in the US. Many K-12 schools in Texas cannot offer a

Chinese language course because they cannot locate professionally trained teachers. The Chinese Studies Program offers training to both prospective and experienced Chinese language teachers. Dr. Xiaohong (Sharon) Wen, Director of Chinese Studies and the Principle Investigator for large federal grants, has been running the Startalk Texas Chinese Language Teacher Program at UH with professors Manuel Gutierrez and Jing Zhang for a few years.

The fact that My Viet Le has become this year's Chinese language learner's icon in China has brought fame to UH. Chinese people watched Viet on TV and voted for his Chinese language and culture performances, and got to know the University of Houston. While My Viet Le has brought visibility to UH, acknowledgement goes to the faculty members of the Chinese Studies Program, particularly to Instructional Assistant Professor Jing Zhang who coached My Viet Le. Jing Zhang received the Ross Lence Teaching Excellence Award from the College of Liberal Arts and Social Sciences this year.

My Viet Le's performance: (822:31) <http://bridge.chinese.cn/c14/Media/videodetail/id/655>



My Viet Le 1st place winner and People's Champion Reward, front row, right

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My Viet Le(李越, name in Chinese), Peoples Champion receiving 79,517 online votes

