

**College/Program:**

College of Health Sciences, Master of Science in Physician Assistant Studies

Hometown:

Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam

Undergraduate Institution:

California State University, Long Beach

Undergraduate Degree(s):

Bachelors of Science (B.S.) in Chemistry

Hobbies/Interests:

Playing piano, cooking, traveling

Previous Career:

Medical Assistant

PROFILE

What inspired you to pursue your health sciences career path?

As a Vietnamese immigrant and first-generation college student, I have witnessed healthcare disparities both in my home country and in underserved U.S. communities. Volunteering and working as a medical assistant showed me how compassionate, patient-centered care can transform

lives. These experiences inspired me to become a PA focused on reducing cultural and language barriers, promoting health equity, and ensuring underserved patients are heard, understood, and supported.

Describe the biggest challenge you overcame on your path to WesternU.

My biggest challenge was adapting to a new culture, healthcare system, and education environment as a Vietnamese immigrant and first-generation college student. Navigating language barriers while balancing coursework, work, and family responsibilities required perseverance, discipline, and strong time-management skills. This experience strengthened my resilience and prepared me for the demands of WesternU's PA program, while deepening my commitment to providing empathetic, culturally sensitive care to underserved communities.

Why did you choose to attend WesternU?

I chose WesternU because of its unwavering commitment to serving underserved and diverse communities. The program's emphasis on health equity and culturally competent care closely aligns with

**Thao Phuong
Dang**



Thao Phuong Dang

PROFILE CONTINUED

my passion to addressing healthcare disparities and improving access for vulnerable populations. WesternU's emphasis on hands-on, community-based clinical experiences, and interprofessional collaboration will equip me to provide compassionate, high-quality care. This mission matches my goal to become a PA who actively improves health outcomes for patients facing systemic barriers.

What is your proudest accomplishment?

Earning the WesternU Board of Trustees Scholarship stands as one of my proudest accomplishments. As an immigrant, overcoming challenges has strengthened my resilience and determination. Alongside this honor, I have completed over 5,000 hours of direct patient care, deepening my commitment to serving underserved communities. This combination of academic recognition and clinical experience motivates me to continue pursuing excellence and to make a meaningful impact in healthcare.

Thank you letter to the Board of Trustees:

I am writing to express my heartfelt gratitude for your generosity in awarding me the WesternU Board of Trustees Scholarship. This support is not only critical financial assistance but also a powerful affirmation of WesternU's commitment to equity and access in healthcare education.

As someone from a low-income, immigrant family and the first in my family to pursue a graduate degree, I have faced many challenges in reaching this point. This scholarship is both an honor and a profound source of encouragement. It reminds me that my background and aspirations are valued and strengthens my sense of belonging in the healthcare field.

The scholarship greatly eases the burden of tuition and living expenses, allowing me to focus fully on the rigorous academic and clinical training in the Master of Science in Physician Assistant Studies program. Your support enables me to stay centered on my growth as a compassionate and competent future PA.

My goal is to work in primary care with underserved communities, especially immigrants and low-income populations who often face systemic barriers to care. I aim to become a PA who not only treats illness but also educates, empowers, and advocates for patients with cultural sensitivity and empathy.

Looking ahead, I hope to contribute to public health efforts that reduce disparities in healthcare access and outcomes. By building trust, increasing health literacy, and offering individualized, respectful care, I believe we can help communities lead healthier lives.

This scholarship brings me one step closer to that vision. Thank you for believing in students like me and for investing in the future of compassionate, community-centered healthcare.

Sincerely,
Thao Phuong Dang, MSPAS '27