

INTERVIEW WITH PROFESSOR PROFESSOR Bui Thanh Huong



PROFESSOR Bui Thanh Huong

CONDUCTING CLASSES IN THE NEW COLLEGE OF SUSTAINABILITY AND TOURISM:

Active Learning Utilizing Beppu's Rapidly Developing Tourism Industry



From the observations of Academic Learning Resource Core Staff (ALCRS) Project Q-Team members, the APU campus has witnessed a surge of excitement and enthusiasm in the AY 2023 Spring semester. Factors contributing to this positive atmosphere include the opening of our new College of Sustainability and Tourism (ST)

and the revision of our curriculum, including courses under APU's ever-crucial Education Development and Learning Support Center (EDLSC). In this semester's Project Q articles, we hope to help faculty members navigate these new frontiers by interviewing and analyzing the teaching methods of two celebrated professors from the ST and EDLSC departments.

I. INTRODUCTION



Professor Bui Thanh Huong received her Ph.D. in Tourism Management from Griffith University, Australia. Her academic and professional background spans from anthropology to tourism and human geography, following her education and work experience in Vietnam, Australia, Europe, and Japan. Subjects she teaches include Tourism Economics, Event and Festival Management, and Travel Industry. She also teaches a collaborative online integrated learning (COIL) course with Kyushu University and supervises Master and Ph.D. research students.

II. Q&A SECTION

1. ABOUT THE ST COLLEGE

Q: Can you introduce us to the ST college and its unique characteristics?

The Sustainability and Tourism College is the newest initiative of APU. It was born out of our university's need to catch up with the global trend of sustainable development and the increasing demand for tourism, locally in Japan and internationally across the globe. The foundations of this college were, firstly, the strength of APU as a global and diverse university and, secondly, the connection of our university to the local community of Beppu.

As for our expertise, the ST curriculum includes management and entrepreneurship lessons inspired by APM courses and, at the same time, tourism, environmental development, and economic studies which intertwine with the APS discipline. In this way, ST draws on strengths and competitive advantages from both APS and APM to become a new and attractive program. On top of that, we also capitalize on the global trend of digitalization and data science. Overall, ST College offers students in-depth and interdisciplinary programs in which social science and management studies interact and fertilize each other instead of remaining isolated.

2. THE PROFESSOR'S TEACHING STYLE

Q: Can you give us some insight into how you conduct your classes?

I have been teaching tourism at APU for ten years, and the experiences I have gained have helped me to form my unique approach. As you know, tourism is an international phenomenon. Therefore, researchers and students in this discipline need constant updates on the developments and global practices of tourism in various countries and regions. For this reason, I am grateful for APU's multicultural environment, which makes our university an excellent laboratory for experiencing cross-cultural learning and gathering input from students of diverse backgrounds. From students' experiences and interests, I tailor exercises and projects to allow students to approach issues they might face in their student lives on campus and prepare for their future careers in the travel and tourism industry. Examples of my teaching applications include organizing student events and multicultural weeks at APU, as well as having students learn about pricing in the travel and tourism industry. As a result of this approach, my students become more engaged in each activity and can learn from each other.

Another critical feature of courses under ST College is the embracement of practical education approaches. In my class, I tailor the lessons to the local resources and encourage students to interact directly and gain experience from real-life, local settings. This way, students can see how academic knowledge reflects reality and how the real world, in turn, contributes to furthering their education. Such exercises are regularly conducted in my seminar class, such as having my students visit tourist attractions in Beppu and utilize what they have learned to interview tourists and understand local issues from a tourist perspective. From this input, we then discuss and work out solutions for these local problems or even develop methods to promote tourism in Beppu using the diverse backgrounds and experiences of APU students.



Photo: Professor Bui's Class on a Nakatsu Field Trip

By adjusting my teaching according to students' interests and these practices, I try to motivate students to actively study the real-life issues that they are fascinated by.

I TRY TO MOTIVATE STUDENTS TO ACTIVELY STUDY THE REAL-LIFE ISSUES THAT THEY ARE FASCINATED BY

experienced the famous Hyotan Onsen. My students then went to the site and interviewed the guests. Finally, from their data, we discussed

For example, in one of my seminar classes, we studied methods of encouraging international guests to experience Beppu's signature traditional Japanese hot springs. Our project began by gathering class members' interests and pinpointing shared concerns, thus forming a research topic. Then we decided on the scale and target of our exercise, which included 40 foreigners of varied genders and ages, all of whom have

the psychological impact of hot springs on international customers and how to adjust various aspects of the experience to attract more international visitors. Overall, I considered this experience a remarkable success as the students were able to re-examine and understand their concerns from the tourists' perspectives instead of merely a scholarly or managerial approach.

Q: How do you utilize APU's new facilities to benefit your teaching?

Technology and facilities in the new Green Commons Building promote students' active learning. These facilities are particularly important for collaborative learning and teaching activities jointly operated with other universities inside Japan and overseas. One of my subjects offers a joint learning and teaching experience (COIL) with students and faculty members from Kyushu University. AY2023 is the first time this class is conducted utilizing APU's brand-new technology-enhanced distance learning approach. This method allows interactive discussions among students and faculty members of both universities despite the physical distance, which is only possible thanks to the multimedia, modern equipment, and a flexible classroom setting. Overall, Green Commons has enabled innovations in teaching, such as these jointly taught and managed classes, which significantly improves education quality at APU.

Photos: Professor Bui during a Joint Seminar with Kyushu University



Other on-campus facilities beneficial for my students are the food distribution areas, including the cafeteria and the new Olive Cafe located in the Green Commons building. Aside from being great spots for students to study, interact, and bond, observing and experiencing these places can give my students valuable lessons on the operation of food distribution businesses, an important sector of the tourism industry.



Photo: Cafeteria



Photo: Olive Cafe

3. OPPORTUNITIES & CHALLENGES

Q: What are some opportunities and challenges you face in teaching ST classes?

As mentioned, the ST curriculum embraces elements of various disciplines, including technical knowledge courses such as data science, statistics, accounting, economics, and econometrics. The new aspect of our college that focuses on these skills can be an asset for students' futures, helping them design entrepreneurial projects or expand their career choices into technological fields.

However, challenges also arise from this opportunity, as many students still approach ST College from a purely social science perspective and thus are afraid to take on the technical challenges presented in its courses. Therefore, our urgent mission is to change those students' perceptions and encourage them to explore and take on challenging specialized subjects.

Q: What are you doing to motivate students to tackle these technical classes?

The learning path of ST subjects is designed with a hierarchy of knowledge and challenges. Entry-level students will start with simple insights. Afterward, the knowledge will steadily become more in-depth as students move on to intermediate and advanced classes in the following semesters. Students following this sequence will master these specialized fields, just like many APU students who have become great at learning languages.



Photos: Professor Bui Having a Discussion with Students

4. FUTURE ASPIRATIONS

Q: What are your ideas and aspirations for the future of the ST college?

Our purpose in establishing the ST college is to provide students with the skills and knowledge from the rapidly developing fields of sustainability and tourism. Therefore, we must constantly gather and analyze real input from these fields, then update and craft our curriculum according to the needs of local and global companies. Only by doing so will we fulfill our responsibility to our students, opening the door for them toward a brighter future.



Photos: Professor Bui and Interviewer

Q: What are your expectations for your peers and students in order to achieve these aspirations?

Each person has a unique approach to teaching and studying, but I hope that together, we can explore the new ST curriculum, embrace its challenges, and find our own opportunities.

INTERVIEWER & AUTHOR



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College: APS (Culture, Society, and Media)

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Impression: I am grateful to Professor Bui for organizing her time for our interview despite her busy schedule. From our conversation, I was most impressed by her innovative approach of teaching via students' interactions with tourists and service providers in Beppu.

Personally, Beppu's peaceful lifestyle and natural hot springs were among the primary factors attracting me to APU. Therefore, I am glad Professor Bui is guiding her students to appreciate this city and use what they learn to develop Beppu's tourism.

WHAT IS



[Q]uality
[Q]uestions
[Q]ueue

At APU there are many professors who put together wonderful classes, and if we could get to know how these classes are planned, it would contribute to the improvement of other professors' classes.

For that purpose, Project holds interviews and publishes articles to share these good practices. These articles have been entitled [Q], comprising a variety of meanings such as: increasing the [Q]uality of classes, answering [Q]uestions to increase quality, and forming a [Q]ueue, or line, of class improvements. We would be very happy if these articles could contribute to the [Q]uest of APU professors' class quality improvement.

Project Q consists of student members from the Academic Learning Support Program (ALRCS) under the support of the Academic Office. For more information, please visit the ALRCS booth based in the APU Library.