

Beyond Academics: The AASuccess Model for Growth and Leadership



MARCH 2025 E-NEWS

At AASuccess, success isn't just about academics—it's about resilience, leadership, and the courage to create impact. These stories illustrate how mentorship here is more than guidance; it's a launchpad for innovation and self-discovery.

For **Vivian Cao-Dao**, AASuccess transformed her from a pre-med student into a healthcare leader, teaching her to integrate diverse perspectives and tackle real-world challenges. **Daniel Nguyen** found his voice through the program, evolving from mentee to mentor, proving that leadership is cultivated through empowerment and accountability.

Founder **Dave Nguyen** highlights AASuccess's dual-system approach, blending character-building with business acumen. By investing in students with exceptional grit, the program shapes individuals who embrace challenges, think strategically, and lead with confidence.

These stories define the AASuccess legacy—a community that doesn't just educate, but empowers the next generation of changemakers.

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BEYOND ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENTS: CREATING TOMORROW'S AASUCCESSORS WITH GRIT

Vivian Cao-Dao's journey with AASuccess illustrates how intensive mentorship transforms promising students into emerging healthcare leaders. Her evolution is marked not just by medical school acceptances from UVA and the Medical College of Virginia but also by increasingly sophisticated professional development that continues well after these achievements.

Initially, Vivian approached medical school interviews with uncertainty about how to articulate her passion for community health and her nuanced understanding and experiences with medicine. Conveying her desire to create meaningful change through an interdisciplinary approach felt daunting. However, Vivian's interactions with mentors and deliberate self-reflection evolved into nuanced professional dialogues. Recent exchanges with Dr. Huy Luu, former US Army Hospital Commander and AAS volunteer mentor, highlight Vivian's evolving ability to contextualize healthcare challenges within broader contexts while aligning them with her aspirations in community health. In discussions on breast cancer research initiatives, she now instinctively integrates multiple stakeholder perspectives and cultural implications—an essential skill set for future medical leadership.

Most striking is her recent embrace of AASuccess's comprehensive development model. Through US-IBDC's practical training platform, Vivian engages with real-world healthcare initiatives while articulating to newer students how AASuccess's dual-system approach - combining NGO character-building with business-world accountability through US-IBDC (USIBDC.com) - creates actionable paths to professional and community success.

This post-acceptance growth phase reveals AASuccess's distinctive impact. Each interaction with mentors becomes an opportunity for deeper reflection and skill refinement, whether crafting executive summaries about healthcare initiatives or discussing public health policy changes. Vivian's continuing engagement with AAS demonstrates how intensive mentorship creates professionals who understand that true success requires constant refinement of both technical and interpersonal capabilities.

FROM MEDICAL STUDENT TO HEALTHCARE INNOVATOR: MY JOURNEY WITH AASUCCESS

When I first joined AASuccess as a pre-med student, I never imagined how profoundly it would reshape my understanding of healthcare leadership. While my medical school acceptances marked important milestones, they represent just the beginning of a much deeper transformation.



My recent meeting with Dave highlights this evolution. On February 19th, we discussed my observations on US-IBDC's healthcare initiatives—analyzing complex systems that would have once overwhelmed me but now energize me. The vision involves an anchor hospital creating standards of care that will be replicated in smaller "vitality centers," improving accessibility while providing stakeholder incentives.

What strikes me most is how this model balances clinical excellence with community responsiveness, allowing providers to tailor services to local patient populations. This represents the integrative thinking my mentors at AASuccess have consistently challenged me to develop.

The prospective Biohealth conference being planned will create an innovation hub where diverse leaders can collaborate within the US-IBDC ecosystem—teaching me to think beyond individual patient care to systems that transform healthcare delivery at scale.

One of the most valuable insights from my discussion with Dave was exploring how team members' perspectives vary based on their roles and strengths. This led to an illuminating distinction between mentors and coaches: while a mentor shares guidance based on personal experience, a coach focuses on understanding an individual's unique qualities and helping them reach their full potential—a distinction that has transformed how I view my own development.

Looking back at my journey, I see how the AASuccess approach demands a level of grit that traditional educational models simply don't require. There were moments of doubt and frustration—times when I considered taking an easier path with clear expectations rather than facing uncomfortable growth. But these challenges have forged a resilience I now carry into every professional setting.



As I prepare to join discussions with Dr. Huy Luu and Dr. Thien Do regarding the 2025 AASuccess Biohealth Conference, I'm committed to approaching these opportunities with thoughtfulness, asking questions with confidence, and clearly articulating my thought process—skills developed through countless hours of challenging feedback sessions.

This transformation from student to healthcare innovator embodies what AASuccess creates: professionals who can navigate complexity, leverage diverse perspectives, and deliver thoughtful solutions to unprecedented challenges—a journey built on courage and perseverance that extends far beyond traditional academic achievements.

Vivian Cao Dao, AASuccess Level 3 Student

FROM MENTEE TO MENTOR: HOW AASUCCESS SHAPED MY GROWTH AND PURPOSE

I joined AASuccess in high school in search of growth, unsure of what growth even meant to me. What I found was more than just a mentorship program—it was a community that believed in me before I fully believed in myself. Whether it was voicing my ideas in student-led projects, stepping up to lead initiatives, or simply learning to say, “This is what I want, and I’m going to go after it,” AASuccess instilled in me the confidence to take control of my own story.

These lessons carried me through college, shaping the clubs I joined, the relationships I forged, and the way I approached every opportunity. It gave me the courage to push for my goals, whether in crucial interviews, difficult academic situations, or professional settings.





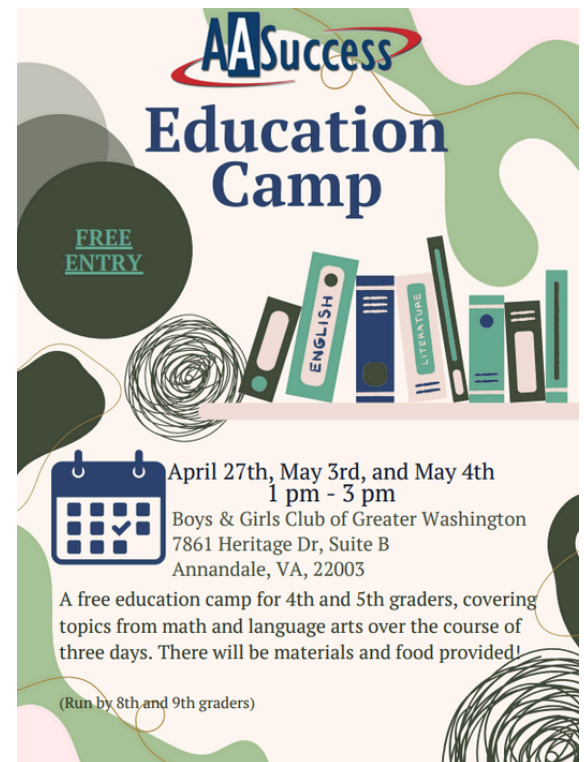
Returning as a mentor, I see reflections of my younger self in these students—full of potential but unsure of how to harness it. My goal isn't just to help them discover their passions; I want to ignite a fire within them to relentlessly pursue those passions with confidence and determination. Growth isn't just about gaining new skills—it's about leveraging those skills in order to take bold steps toward shaping one's future. And as I mentor these students, I continue to grow myself, learning from their resilience, their ambitions, and their stories.

Daniel Nguyen, AASuccess Alumni and Volunteer

EMPOWERING YOUNG MINDS: FREE EDUCATION CAMP FOR 4TH & 5TH GRADERS


AASuccess students Mason Le and Hilary Nguyen are proving that leadership has no age limit. As part of our Life Skills Training Program, they are organizing a **free, three-day Education Camp** for **4th and 5th graders** on April 24, May 3, and May 4, 2025. Covering math and language arts, this camp provides structured lessons, engaging activities, and hands-on learning—all designed and led by student mentors.

With free entry, all materials, and meals provided, this initiative not only supports young learners but also helps Mason and Hilary develop project management, public speaking, marketing, and teamwork skills. If you know someone who could benefit from this program, please share this opportunity. Let's work together to empower the next generation through education and community-driven leadership!



AASuccess
Education Camp

FREE ENTRY

 **April 27th, May 3rd, and May 4th
1 pm - 3 pm**
Boys & Girls Club of Greater Washington
7861 Heritage Dr, Suite B
Annandale, VA, 22003

A free education camp for 4th and 5th graders, covering topics from math and language arts over the course of three days. There will be materials and food provided!

(Run by 8th and 9th graders)



YouthCon as my first project was a very fun experience. Something new to me was joining meetings every week. Sometimes I would either forget to join or I would just be asleep. Something hard for me to do was emailing. I had to email lots of people like our judges, applicants and volunteers. I would sometimes get confused on who I was emailing, but with the help of Tyler and Angela, I would get on track. There were a lot of new things for me to learn, but it was a great learning experience. Overall, I had a great experience during YouthCon.”

Leo Tran, AASuccess Student Level 1

IN THE MADNESS, WE MOVE



Everything’s clashing together now as the working weeks end and quarters close. Projects come to their own end and AASuccess still passes by another week. Surely, this must all seem inferior, time erodes our progress yet creates it ever so slightly.

Typically, people don’t think they’ve gotten far in a way such as this, but that is only subjective. March Madness was created in 1939 by the NCAA, and has always been a foundation within sports such as basketball, football, and whatever athletic conundrum comes about. The charm of it all lies in opinion– not statistic, nobody (at least obsessive) thinks of the winner based on calculation, but favor. Subjectivity lies in everything, and the resulting favorability always lies within chance. On the idea of statistics, however, all of which is objective with no favor, and much like subjectivity– favorability is chance.

So what does this account for? Surely, “march madness” has absolutely no usefulness in AASuccess, and you’re right, it’s not. And while nobody in our office is locked up in a padded cell, so many things are going by so fast, and time can only tell by chance of what is in our favor and isn’t, but subjectivity only drives us forward, and that is courage.

Allyson Nguyen, AASuccess Level 1 Student