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Coaching and Mentoring Programs Ensuring Equal Opportunity to Higher Education for Laotian Students

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NORTHERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY

Coaching and Mentoring Programs Ensuring Equal Opportunity

to Higher Education for Laotian Students

A Capstone Submitted to the

University Honors Program

In Partial Fulfillment of the

Requirements of the Baccalaureate Degree

With Honors

Department Of

Management

By

Vilaya Sirivong

DeKalb, Illinois

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University Honors Program
Capstone Faculty Approval Page

Capstone Title: Coaching and Mentoring Programs Ensuring Equal Opportunity to Higher Education for Laotian Students

Coaching and Mentoring Programs Ensuring Equal Opportunity to Higher Education for Laotian Students

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ABSTRACT

Laos is a developing country where quality education is in short supply. For the past years, teenagers and young adults have been applying for various scholarships to pursue their education somewhere else. According to Scholarshipads.com (2022), Lao students are generally eligible for more than 1000 different international scholarships every year, this does not include the number of awardees each scholarship offers. The education ranges from high school, course, associate, undergraduate, graduate, and doctorate degrees. Most of these scholarships and financial aid are partial to full-expense funding.

Even though students apply and desire to be selected, they do not meet the minimum criteria for adequate education, English language proficiency, application filling skills, interview skills, leadership experiences, work experiences, community involvement, and, most importantly, the value of their identity and story. This issue can be solved if students have the right guidance and understanding of what they can do to prepare themselves for such opportunities at an early age.

The purpose of this project is to outline optimal and potential coaching and mentoring program for underprivileged and general students in Laos to ensure equal opportunities in applying for higher education scholarships abroad. Through a survey and secondary research, the program will explain the best ways students can prepare themselves for various scholarships. The survey has shown a major disconnect in what skills students believe to be essential to receive a scholarship compared to what scholarship providers look for. The programs will focus on coaching and mentoring students to lessen the equity gap between high and low-income families in Laos by allowing their children to have access to the knowledge and training they need to be successful in applying for scholarships; helping them to break through the cycle of poverty through higher education.

INTRODUCTION

Growing up in Laos for 19 years, I had a chance to witness the scarcity of quality education and poverty first-hand. According to a non-governmental research group based in the United States of America, Freedom House, the Lao education system is ranked 108 out of 149 countries. Due to the lack of adequate funding, residents are not receiving the education they need to raise themselves out of poverty (Anonymous, 2014).

Many students understand this hardship and realize their circumstances but struggle to get help accessing the education they need beyond the elementary level due to a lack of financial support, transportation, technology, and awareness of available opportunities. Thus, many students discontinue their education and learning after elementary, middle, and high school levels. This has led to many of them not being able to break the poverty cycle in their family.

Studying abroad is a great option since good higher education is in short supply in Laos. Only five public universities are available for bachelor's programs (Anonymous, n.d.). Other available private colleges only offer associate degrees and are relatively more expensive than public institutions. With nearly 23% of the population being in poverty, families, and young children are forced to be in the labor market instead of focusing on their education (Chun, 2022). Moreover, an unhealthy proportion of Laotian teachers do not receive the appropriate salary or training they need to teach consistently and effectively creating a vicious cycle of educational underachievement within available universities and colleges (Anonymous, 2014).

Leadership and service are considered the top skills higher education scholarship providers look for in their awardees in addition to academic excellence, self-reliance, and creativity (GT Scholars, n.d.). these skills are what high school students need to leverage to have equal access and opportunities through scholarships.

Coaching and mentoring are seen as one of the most effective ways to train and develop students' leadership skills at an early age, especially teenagers and young adults. Mentoring is development driven, looking not just at the mentee's current position but beyond, taking a more holistic approach to further development (Zust, 2017). Coaching is more performance-driven, designed to improve the person's current performance and empower them to adopt a way of problem-solving that will sustain over time.

This capstone project will outline or propose the development of programs that will be suitable for students aged 12 to 19 in Laos. The research comprises information on Laos' higher education system and the program lesson plans.

IMPORTANCE

The programs will not only help students to shape their future early for education, funding, and career opportunities but also for them to realize their self-worth and identity. The success of the programs will greatly improve the quality of life for the participating students and their families, allowing them to expand their knowledge, career options, and life choices.

Many children who are left to deal with education inequality often participate in child labor to help their families and experience a high chance of food insecurity throughout their lives. In 2021, approximately 28% of children in Laos are engaged in child labor instead of learning according to the Save The Children report (Chun, 2022).

METHOD

This project involved in-depth secondary research in acquiring information and providing solid recommendations related to crucial skills, courses, and experiences. Leadership course content from MGMT 447 was included to support the coaching and mentoring program's legitimacy and practicality.

Academic Search Complete

Academic Search Complete is a leading database resource for scholarly research. It supports high-level research through scholarly articles, journals, periodicals, reports, and eBooks. Content includes active peer-reviewed journals from several disciplines including education.

Additional Resources

Google Scholar

Google Scholar provides articles and data from the University of Chicago and Harvard Business Review (HBR). The University of Chicago has many case studies and resources about Laos's education system while HBR provides insights and data through articles.

Aside from the secondary research, a survey was sent to Laotian students and parents to evaluate what they believe to be the most needed skills, how they are currently acquiring those skills, and which process of scholarship application they struggle with the most. The survey was created by Northern Illinois University's Qualtrics account with quantitative and qualitative questions.

RESULTS

I received 96 survey responses, out of those, 65 responses were 100% completed. The survey comprises both quantitative and qualitative responses. The first section collects demographic information. The majority of respondents are students between the ages of 14-24 with 65% being female.

Age	Percentage
14-17	8.33%
18-24	61.46%
25-34	29.17%
35-44	1.04%
Total	100.00%

Table 1.1. Respondents age

Gender	Percentage
Female	65.63%
Male	32.29%
Prefer not to say	2.08%
Total	100.00%

Table 1.2. Respondents gender

About 89% of the respondents can converse in English while 90% of them wish to study abroad. The results demonstrate a very high percentage of Laotians that would like to continue their education outside of Laos.

Can converse in English	Percentage
Yes	89.58%
No	10.42%
Total	100.00%

Table 1.3. Respondents' English ability

Want to study abroad	Percentage
Yes	90.32%
No	2.15%
Unsure	7.53%
Total	100.00%

Table 1.4. Study abroad opinion

There are still a lot of students that have never applied for scholarships before. Even though 63% of them have experience applying for scholarships, only 45% were successful. This success rate does not entail how many times someone has applied to receive a scholarship.

Has applied for scholarships	Percentage
Yes	63.44%
No	36.56%
Total	100.00%

Table 1.5. Respondents' scholarship application experience

Has received a scholarship	Percentage
Yes	45.16%
No	54.84%
Total	100.00%

Table 1.6. Respondents' scholarship records

The following results pertain to the respondent's perception of the skills, qualifications, and experiences that they think are important and their own assessments of how well-equipped they are to successfully receive a scholarship.

Question 1: Which of the following skills, qualifications, or experiences do you think are important to have to successfully receive a scholarship?

	Important	Somewhat Important	Not Important	Mean	Standard Deviation
Communication skills	93.51%	6.49%	0.00%	4.57	0.61
Interview skills	93.51%	5.19%	1.30%	4.43	0.64
Time management skills	84.41%	15.58%	0.00%	4.34	0.73
Creativity	81.82%	16.88%	1.30%	4.1	0.72
Self-reliant skills	81.82%	14.29%	3.90%	4.21	0.83
English proficiency	80.51%	18.18%	1.30%	4.25	0.79
Planning and budgeting skills	79.22%	16.88%	3.90%	4.22	0.86
Leadership skills	79.22%	15.58%	5.20%	4.12	0.9
Research skills	77.92%	20.78%	1.30%	4.12	0.82
Application filling skills	77.92%	16.88%	5.19%	4.08	0.85
Community involvement	75.32%	19.48%	5.19%	4.08	0.88
Work experiences	42.85%	37.66%	19.48%	3.35	1.07
Academic excellence	42.85%	31.17%	25.98%	3.19	0.98
Traveling experiences	35.06%	31.17%	33.76%	3.01	1.08

Table 1.7. Importance of skills, qualifications, and experiences

More information about how this data connects with what scholarship providers look for will be discussed in the section below.

Question 2: How are you acquiring or developing the following skills, qualifications, or experiences?

	From School	From Extra-curricular activities	From Family	Other	Do not have this skill
Leadership skills	54.41%	73.53%	30.88%	29.41%	5.88%
Community involvement	39.71%	80.88%	14.71%	22.06%	1.47%
Communication skills	61.76%	82.35%	36.76%	22.06%	1.47%
Time management skills	47.06%	54.41%	47.06%	35.29%	2.94%
Planning and budgeting	29.41%	52.94%	38.24%	33.82%	7.35%
English proficiency	77.94%	72.06%	27.94%	41.18%	1.47%
Application filling skills	29.41%	42.65%	13.24%	51.47%	14.71%
Creativity	44.12%	69.12%	27.94%	48.53%	2.94%
Interview skills	29.41%	60.29%	11.76%	51.47%	10.29%
Traveling experiences	20.59%	52.94%	51.47%	45.59%	10.29%
Work experiences	22.06%	69.12%	29.41%	50.00%	10.29%
Academic excellence	80.88%	42.65%	38.24%	29.41%	4.41%
Self-reliant skills	27.94%	67.65%	60.29%	45.59%	1.47%
Research skills	69.12%	61.76%	19.12%	48.53%	2.94%

Table 1.8. Acquisition and development of skills, qualifications, and experiences

Question 3: How confident are you with the following process?

	Very Confident	Confident	Somewhat Confident	Not Confident	Mean
Serving the community	27.69%	35.38%	26.15%	10.77%	2.71
Exploring a new country by yourself	27.69%	30.77%	27.69%	13.85%	2.69
Communicating in English	21.54%	33.85%	30.77%	13.85%	2.6
Working effectively in teams	16.92%	46.15%	33.85%	3.08%	2.65
Compiling documents	15.38%	26.15%	33.85%	24.62%	2.4
Meeting deadlines	13.85%	32.31%	40.00%	13.85%	2.54
Filling out applications	7.69%	29.23%	33.85%	29.23%	2.2
Understanding scholarship information	7.69%	21.54%	47.69%	23.08%	2.4
Interviewing	6.15%	20.00%	43.08%	30.77%	2.25
Finding scholarships	6.15%	20.00%	36.92%	36.92%	2.12
Holding a leadership position	4.62%	30.77%	41.54%	23.08%	2.28
Excelling academically	3.08%	33.85%	46.15%	16.92%	2.35

Table 1.8. The confidence level of skills, qualifications, and experiences

KEY FINDINGS

There were many interesting key findings that can ensure the program effectiveness. From the responses, the following key findings were concluded:

a. Perceived Importance of Skills, Qualifications, and Experiences

After analyzing these results, the results show that there are many gaps and issues with how students think of what can help them get a scholarship and what scholarship providers look for. GT Scholars is a non-profit organization in London that provides strategies, skills, and support to young people aged 11-18 to achieve their academic and career aspirations, regardless of their background. Leadership and service are considered the top skills higher education scholarship providers look for in their awardees in addition to academic excellence, self-reliance, and creativity (GT Scholars, n.d.).

From Participants	From Scholarship Providers
1. Communication skills (93.51%)	1. Leadership skills
2. Interview skills (93.51%)	2. Service
3. Time management skills (84.41%)	3. Academic Excellence
4. Creativity (81.82%)	4. Self-reliance skills
5. Self-reliant skills (81.82%)	5. Creativity

However, the result of the survey shows that academic excellence, leadership skills, and community involvement are ranked top five as skills that are perceived not to be important to successfully receive a scholarship. This shows that students still have the wrong focus on the basic qualities and experiences they should have to be considered a good candidate for a scholarship, especially towards the perceived importance of leadership skills.

Other skills, qualifications, and experiences that are perceived as important mentioned in the survey are computer literacy, emotional stability in stressful situations, openness to experience, resilience, social skills, problem-solving, and self-awareness.

b. Participant Confidence in Skills, Qualifications, and Experiences

Confident	Not Confident
1. Serving the community (27.69%)	1. Finding scholarships (36.92%)
2. Exploring a new country alone (27.69%)	2. Interviewing (30.77%)
3. Communicating in English (21.54%)	3. Filling out applications (29.23%)
4. Working effectively in teams (16.92%)	4. Compiling documents (24.62%)
5. Compiling documents (15.38%)	5. Understanding scholarship information and holding a leadership position (23.08%)

The top five skills, qualifications, and experiences that respondents do not possess are the following:

1. Application filling skills (14.71 %)
2. Traveling experiences (10.29 %)
3. Work experiences (10.29%)
4. Interview skills (10.29%)
5. Planning and budgeting skills (7.35%)

Furthermore, the survey results show a high percentage of students struggle to find a scholarship that fits them, pass an interview, fill out application forms, compile essential documents, understand scholarship information, and hold a leadership position. This portrays a huge issue as they are all necessary skills and experiences one must have in order to even complete an application, not to consider passing on to the next stage of the selection process.

c. Ways participants develop their skills

- The top five skills, qualifications, and experiences acquired from schools are:
 1. Academic excellence (80.88%)
 2. English proficiency (77.94%)
 3. Research skills (69.12%)
 4. Communication skills (61.76%)
 5. Leadership skills (54.41%)

- The top five skills, qualifications, and experiences acquired from extra-curricular activities are:
 1. Communication skills (82.35%)
 2. Community involvement (80.88%)
 3. Leadership skills (73.53%)
 4. English proficiency (72.06%)
 5. Creativity (69.12%)

- The top five skills, qualifications, and experiences acquired from family activities are:
 1. Self-reliant skills (60.29%)
 2. Traveling experiences (51.47%)
 3. Time management skills (47.06%)
 4. Planning and budgeting skills (38.24%)
 5. Academic excellence (38.24%)

Other ways of acquiring and developing these skills, qualifications, and experiences mentioned in the survey are through self-learning, social media, YouTube, connections, networking, mentors, friends, volunteering, books, and discussions.

In conclusion, the two main findings suggest that there is a disconnect between what skills are needed and what students think is important. There is also a lack of confidence in the whole scholarship process. These issues led to the results of only 45% of respondents were able to successfully receive a scholarship.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The section below is an overview of the requirements of five highly anticipated scholarships for Laotian students to study abroad in higher education. The scholarship information is then combined with the survey results to create a plan for coaching and mentoring programs to help students develop certain skills, qualifications, and experiences for scholarships that they desire.

Scholarships Information

Some of the most well-known and highly anticipated undergraduate scholarships provided to Laotian students to study abroad are the United World College scholarships (UWC), Stipendium Hungaricum program, Global Korea Scholarships (GKS), ASEAN scholarship, and Global Undergraduate Exchange Program (UGRAD).

UWC scholarship is given to 3-4 high school students annually to study abroad with their last two years of high school in one of the United World College branches around the world, like Canada, England, China, Thailand, India, etc. Students can then apply to any college or university in the United States for undergraduate programs. Both programs are fully paid for by the scholarship. Students also get stipends and support for anything that they need.

Stipendium Hungaricum Award selects 80-120 students from Laos every year to study in Hungary for undergraduate, graduate, and doctorate degrees. The majority of awards are allocated to bachelor's degrees. The program covers tuition fees and living expenses.

GKS selects two Lao nationals each for associate degree and four-year undergraduate programs at top colleges and universities in Korea. Selected candidates will receive full tuition assistance

once they meet the requirements for their Korean language proficiency. This scholarship is considered to be one of the most competitive and difficult programs to get into.

ASEAN Scholarship awards a couple of Laotian students with a four-year program consisting of grade 11 to second year in a college in Singapore. They cover all school-related fees and provide assistance with traveling and living expenses.

UGRAD is an exchange program supported by the U.S. Department of State to bring three Laotian college students to study at a university for either one or two semesters. The expenses are all paid for by the U.S. government. Participants are expected to lead a minimum of one service project when they return to the country.

Below are the processes and requirements for each of these highly anticipated scholarships.

Scholarships	Required Process					Required skills, qualifications, and experiences				
	Application form	Supporting Documents	Interview	Entrance Test	On-site Group Activity	Academic Excellence	Leadership	Community Involvement	Self-reliant Skills	English Proficiency
UWC	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Stipendium Hungaricum	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓			✓	✓
GKS	✓	✓	✓			✓		✓	✓	✓
ASEAN Scholarship	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
UGRAD	✓	✓	✓				✓	✓	✓	✓

Table 2.1. Processes and requirements of highly anticipated scholarships

Explanations of required process:

- Application form – can consist of essay-type questions.
- Supporting documents – might include a motivation letter, letter of recommendation, study plan, birth certificate, school transcript, certificates of community involvement or awards, etc.
- Interview – can consist of up to two interviews.
- Entrance test – potential psychological reasoning test, university-based tests, and math tests.
- On-site group activities – selected candidates are put into groups to see potential leaders, team players, and individual personalities.

Explanations of required skills, qualifications, and experiences:

- Academic excellence – measures applicants’ academic performance through the request of a transcript or requiring applicants to meet a certain level of academic expectations laid out by the scholarship committee.
- Leadership skills – stated as a part of the scholarship eligibility criteria for applicants that show high potential for leadership development and eagerness to lead during their scholarship period once they are selected.
- Community involvement – requires that applicants have been involved in their community prior to applying for the scholarship or are expected to be involved in their community during/after the scholarship period.

- Self-reliant skills – applicants are expected to live independently during their time abroad and navigate their daily needs themselves.
- English proficiency – applicants are required to submit proof of English language proficiency to the scholarship committee as part of their application or admission to an institution. The most common language tests are the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) and International English Language Testing System (IELTS).

Coaching and Mentoring Programs

This coaching and mentoring program is suitable for students aged 12 to 19 in Laos. The coach and mentor can be the same person. However, they will have to train students differently depending on the situation and the method they are using. When mentoring, the mentor is allowed to help the student by giving them ideas and guidance on how they can accomplish the tasks at hand. On the other hand, the coach is to empower the student to reach self-realization and solve their own problem the way they think would work best for them through powerful questioning.

The coach will have to follow the SOAR model when coaching their students for the best learning experience and development of self-reliance, problem-solving, and creativity skills (Willington, 2016). The coach will first ask the student about their current situation or their past experiences with scholarship applications. Then, the student would state their desired outcome according to the SMART goals along with listing alternatives of how they plan to achieve their goals. Lastly, the student and coach will agree on a rollout plan where the student would take the responsibilities of executing them.

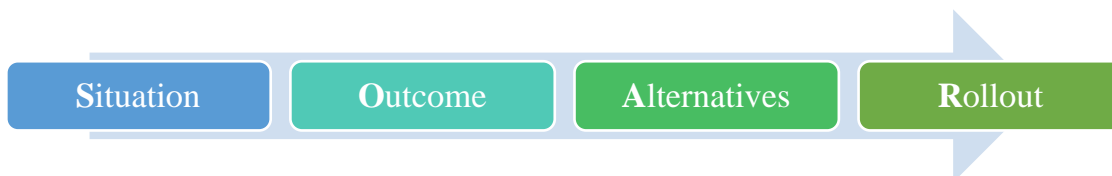


Figure 2.1. SOAR Model

Prior to the start of the program, every student must have a one-on-one discussion with a mentor to discuss their desired outcomes, the scholarships they plan to apply for, their family financial situation, and their experiences. Once the mentor understands the situation, they will recommend the optimal start path for the student based on their current level.

The program will be divided into two parts that students can complete. Both will ensure that students are ready for their desired scholarship application process and required skills, qualifications, and experiences. Depending on their experience, they might or might not have to pursue all parts of both programs. For example, a student who has already been heavily involved in their community will not be required to partake in the program that intends to improve this area. However, they will still have the option to do so as desired. The program content can be duplicated as seen as appropriate by the coach/mentor. Program duration and path can be tailored

to each student based on their current situation and goals. Some sessions can also be recorded as asynchronous sessions such as how to navigate certain scholarship websites or computer literacy trainings.

Programs for Application Process Improvement

For this part of the program, students will partner with their mentor/coach to learn to fill out application forms, prepare supporting documents, practice interviews, prepare for entrance tests, and succeed in a group activity.

- **Learning to fill out application forms**
 - Students will need to learn about several scholarship requirements and eligibility criteria early on, fully understand the information, and practice filling out forms to gain hands-on experience. The mentor will assist students in understanding the scholarship website and resources that they can use.
 - Then, the student will learn to fill out multiple applications online and on paper to improve this skill and turn them into the mentor for feedback. The forms can be from any scholarship with real questions and information.
 - The mentor will make sure students know what documents they need to have on hand to successfully answer all the questions and assist them in acquiring those from their school and guardians.
 - The coach/mentor will also help guide the student in answering essay questions by asking thought-provoking questions and helping them to use their identity, personality, stories, and goals to make them stand out.

- **Compiling supporting documents**
 - Some students do not know what certain documents are and how to correctly acquire or compose them. The coach will first task the student to read through the scholarship information and requirements to identify needed documents.
 - The student will then identify how they can acquire each of the documents with the validation from the coach.
 - For documents like motivation letters and study plans, which students have to compose themselves, the coach/mentor will encourage them to complete them by a deadline and assist them in finding a way how they can use their uniqueness, identity, and stories to showcase their experiences and prove their ability to survive and be successful during their time abroad.

- **Practicing interviews**
 - Every student will complete several self-assessments to learn more about themselves prior to the interview. Some examples of the assessment are:
 - Big 5 Personality
 - Conflict Management Style
 - Locus of Control
 - Type A Personality

- Emotional Intelligence
 - Cultural Intelligence
 - Leadership Style
 - The mentor will explain the results of the assessments and find connections between all of them, so students have better understandings of their strengths and weaknesses.
 - Once students are highly self-aware, they can express their thoughts and identity clearly during interviews. They can also use their identity to support their goal statements and to convince the scholarship committee that they will be a successful candidate because of who they are.
 - Students will also learn interview tips from experienced mentors on how to answer certain difficult questions through both prepared and impromptu interviews both online and in-person.
 - They will also learn to prepare questions for the interviewer that show their interests and make them unique from other candidates.
 - The coach/mentor will give constructive feedback to the students after every mock interview and give suggestions on how they can do better next time without altering their stories.
- **Preparing for entrance tests**
 - There are many resources online that students can practice taking entrance tests, both timed and untimed. The mentor will provide some resources to the students but leave some gaps for them to seek out other resources themselves. This will encourage self-reliance skills and problem-solving.
 - The mentor will have answer keys to all the entrance tests and will guide the students through all the questions after their practice to explain the logic and reasoning behind the answers.
 - For the purposes of preparation, the entrance test will be administered similarly to the real test environment of the corresponding scholarship.
- **Getting ready for on-site group activities**
 - The coach will have information about what the on-site activities have been like in the past and will explain the main idea to the students without giving away any information that can potentially alter their natural behavior.
 - The students will be asked to reevaluate what skills and qualities they have to be chosen for the scholarship and brainstorm how they will showcase that during their group interaction.
 - Role-playing can be helpful for students to prepare for certain scenarios. The coach can alter their role-play behavior to help students navigate easy and difficult scenarios.
 - The student's body language, expression, and verbal behaviors will be monitored so the coach can give helpful feedback. The coach is not allowed to tell the student how they should behave but can communicate how they act might affect their performance so they can come up with their own solutions.

Programs to Develop Required Skills, Qualifications, and Experiences

This part of the program outlines the overview of how students can develop certain areas contributing to their academic performance, leadership skills, community involvement, self-reliant skills, and English language proficiency.

- **Improving academic performance**

- Since some scholarships require candidates to excel academically whether that would be in certain subjects or overall, students will have to learn about their learning style and focus on finding a learning method that works for them. According to the Psychology Discussion website (Sharma, n.d.), the two factors that influence learning are factors associated with the learner and the learning process. The coach/mentor will assist the students in finding an optimal solution to help them learn.
 - Factors associated with learner include:
 - Motivation: what is the student motivated by? How often do they need to be motivated?
 - Readiness and willpower: What is their mindset on overcoming obstacles? Do they truly believe they can develop a positive learning attitude?
 - Ability of the learner: Is the student eager to learn? What resources do they need to get to their goals?
 - Level of aspiration and achievement: Is the student aware of their level of ability? Do they have solid goals to achieve?
 - Attention: How can the student concentrate best while learning? How are they eliminating distractions?
 - Factors associated with the learning process include:
 - Methods of learning: Does the student learn better with part or whole method? Should the student have some time to grasp concepts or do they learn better continually?
 - Feedback: Does the student take feedback or is able to pivot their method as needed?
 - Physical atmosphere: Does the student have a well-lit, calm, and clean environment? Do they have the needed resources and technology?

- **Developing leadership skills**

- Leadership is the top skill scholarship providers seek in their applicants. It can be developed both from hands-on experience and observations.
- To expedite the learning process, students will be put into groups for activities that are related to community involvement and personal development.
- Possible activities include tasking a group of 4-6 students for a 3-5 months long civic engagement project that requires them to learn about community outreach, fundraising, needs assessment, budgeting, planning, collaboration, and project execution.
- Students will undergo workshops on team building, conflict management, constructive feedback, and communication before project execution.

- The project must be impactful to a community of needs with real results. Students will also be required to present their plan and report the progress to the coach/mentor at the end.
 - To ensure opportunities for students to develop leadership, creativity, and teamwork skills, the project will be planned, managed, and executed by the students with minimal assistance from the mentor. They will be responsible for meeting their own deadlines and managing limited resources.
 - With all that said, the key to the success of the project is for the coach to ensure that the students are truly able to be themselves, have fun, get feedback, and have opportunities to excel in an accommodating environment.
- **Gaining community involvement experiences**
 - The more experience students have outside of the program, the more they can learn about themselves and explore their true passion. Thus, part of the program is to empower students to get involved in projects of their chosen field with other organizations.
 - To help students get involved, the mentor will teach them how to find opportunities on social media, since they are the most common platform to get information about involvement opportunities. These involvements can include volunteering, joining non-profit organizations as members, attending workshops or competitions, and networking opportunities.
 - It is also very common that these opportunities require an application form submission or an interview depending on the nature of the involvement. Students will learn to adapt their responses in different situations while also learning and contributing to great causes that can set them apart from other candidates.
- **Strengthening self-reliant skills**
 - For students to learn to be independent, leaving their comfort zone is essential. This includes leaving their hometown, school, and environment. Part of the program will require students to attend camps or service projects in areas that they are not familiar with to complete a task. For example, students that grew up in the capital city will participate in a camp or community service project in rural areas to teach English to elementary students.
 - They will be required to adhere to all rules set in place during the program to develop discipline, time management, and planning skills.
 - Other opportunities that can help students to develop these skills can also be provided by the mentor/coach such as computer literacy programs, competitions, or exchange programs abroad.
 - These experiences will allow them to strengthen self-reliant skills so they can navigate their time of higher education abroad by themselves.
- **Achieving English language proficiency**
 - Since application forms are mostly in English, students that are at a beginner level will have to be recommended to take a free or paid course offered within the country by different organizations. Some organizations that offer free English courses are NK Seeds in Luang Prabang province and American Center in Vientiane Capital.

- They can also use other free resources like YouTube, learning-related social media pages, and English language volunteers.
- Those that are able to afford classes will be recommended to take courses that will prepare them for IELTS or TOEFL exams.
- While learning English, they can still be part of the program for other skills that do not require English. Once their English level has improved to an intermediate level, they can start learning about the application process; or practice using the Lao language with the same process.
- The coaching and mentoring program will also incorporate English as much as possible depending on the English level of each group of students.

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