

Western Hmong Student Association Media Kit

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Western HMONG Student Association

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Overview:

Western HMONG Student Association (WHSA) is a Western Washing University Associated Students club founded in 2013. At two years old WHSA has over 10 members and is continuing to grow. WSHA is a group of Hmong students that celebrate their participation and advance in higher education as well as build community among fellow Hmong students. The WHSA is committed to cultivating an inviting welcoming and comfortable culture for Hmong students working toward gaining a degree, something among their culture and heritage that is rare and hardly sought after. The WHSA is open to anyone and everyone who wants to join. It's a place where Hmong students can ask questions, gather answers and gain the support they may not have from home.

Current activities:

WSHA, as a new group on campus, have several upcoming events in the next year. The first event is the Hmong College Night followed by the Hmong New Year Dinner, as well as various fundraisers, Heritage Dinner, and countless volunteer experiences. They meet weekly as a group on Wednesday evenings on Western's campus at 5 p.m. in Academic West 204.

Facts:

Key terms

- **Laotian Americans** is a term that often encompasses both the Laos natives as well as the Hmong culture and is used often when talking about Hmong demographics and statistics.
- **Hmong:** The name for the ethnic group of people located in Southeast Asia. After the Vietnam War, the new government in Laos saw the Hmong people as enemies

for assisting the U.S. in the war (Laotian, 2015). Many Hmong people saw America as a new opportunity and began emigrating to their former allies. Hmong have become nomadic and have populations across the globe (Western, 2015).

Local

- Out of 15,060 students at Western Washington University in the fall of 2014, only 12 students were Laotian. (Student, 2014)
- The Hmong student population made up less than 0.1% of the entire university's population in the fall of 2014 (Student, 2014)
- In 1980, only 388 students out of 10,616 were of color, which calculates to 3.7% of all students. (Diversity, 2015)
- Today, out of 15,060 students 3,547 of them are of color, which brings the percentage up from 3.7% in 1980 to 23.6% (Diversity, 2015)
- Western offers over 10 different scholarships specifically for students with ethnic background or are part of minority groups on campus (Scholarship, 2015)

Regional

- Hmong Association of Washington was created to support the Hmong community in the Puget Sound region and is the only established Hmong organization in the Seattle area. One of their key goals in their mission is to promote education within the community. (Hmong, 2015).
- In 2005 a census reflected that only 1,380 Hmong individuals resided in Washington State. (U.S. 2005)
- In the Western region, most of the Hmong population continued to be concentrated in California. In the West, the overall growth rate from 2000-2010 was 46% (Chang, 2013).
- A study showed that Hmong individuals were often categorized with the rest of the "Asian" population and became part of their statistic when in reality they were doing far worse than the broader group of Asians and needed more attention and awareness to be brought to the fact they were struggling in their education (Iannarelli, 2014).
- Throughout the Western region of the United States there are 73,526 Hmong individuals as of a 2005 census(Southeast, 2005)

National

- The Hmong population in the United States increased by 40% from 2000 to 2010 (Chang, 2013).

- The Hmong have some of the lowest bachelor's degree attainment rates across racial and ethnic groups (Chang, 2013).
- Racializing processes significantly impact the ways in which Hmong American students are situated and shaped by Whiteness as property within schools. (DePouw, 2012)
- A U.S. Census gathered that out of 188,950,759 Hmong individuals over the age of 25, only 17% had gone on to receive their bachelor's degree. 27.5% had received at least some college, and only 10% when on beyond their bachelor degree to higher education. (U.S., 2005)
- Within America there are 183,265 Hmong individuals as of a 2005 census (Southeast, 2005)

Biographies:

Khou Moua

Khou Moua is the president/coordinator of WSHA.

Email: mouak@students.wvu.edu

About: Khou Moua is in her fourth year at the university and has been president of the club for the last two years. She was part of the founders of the group and has watched it develop from the ground up. Moua is the first in her family to attend a university. She is passionate about the club and about spreading Hmong awareness and promoting higher education.

Rickey Chang

Rickey Chang is the vice president/assistant coordinator of WSHA

Email: changr3@students.wvu.edu

About: Rickey Chang a junior at Western was also one of the co-founders of the club. She has created momentum within the club and is passionate about watching it continue to develop and carry on once she is graduated.

Boilerplate:

Western Hmong Student Association, which was founded in 2013, is an Associated Students Club at Western Washington University. The club's mission is to not only encourage Hmong students to obtain a college degree but also to increase awareness of Western Washington University and the great education they are receiving on that campus. The club meets weekly on campus; Wednesday evenings at 5 p.m. Among smaller events such as fundraisers and bake sales, WHSA has several main events they plan each year. The Heritage Dinner, Hmong New Year, and Hmong College Night are some of their more popular events. Hmong College Night occurs mid-November and takes place in

Kirkland. The club drives down and meets with Hmong High School students in the greater Kirkland area. They hope to spark motivation and educate the students on going to college and the first steps they need to take in order to be successful. WHSA strives to build a community among Hmong students at WWU and has anywhere from 15-20 members at a given time. For more information visit WHSA's organizational portal: <https://orgsync.com/82414/polls>

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Western Hmong Student Association Top 10 FAQs List

1. What is “Hmong”?

Hmong is the name for the nomadic people of Southeast Asia. It represents our culture, history and way of life.
2. Wait, so you’re not Mongolian?

No! Hmong people come from many places, but some primary countries are Laos, Vietnam, Thailand and even parts of China.
3. What does WHSA DO?

The goal of WHSA is two-fold

 - Encourage and spread Hmong culture at Western
 - Provide a route and access to college for Hmong youth in Washington.
4. How can I join?

Show up, it’s free! WHSA likes members who take the extra initiative in group participation. By being an active and helpful member of the group you get **full benefits**, like access to our end of the year potluck.
5. Does WHSA have meetings?

WHSA meets each Wednesday, 5 p.m. in Academic West. We discuss a piece of Hmong culture and plan events.
6. Do I have to be Hmong to join?

Not at all. Encouraging and informing people on Hmong culture would be fruitless if everyone who came was Hmong. We want to show other groups on campus that we are here!
7. What events can I expect from WHSA this year?

In the fall we celebrate Hmong New Year and we have our College Night, where we encourage Hmong youth to attend Western. Expect a Hmong heritage dinner Fall 2016.
8. Do Hmong youth have a hard time getting to college or something?

They do. The path to higher education is not easily navigated for Hmong youth. As a club we reach out to young Hmong and show them how fantastic Western and college is!
9. Are you an ESC group?

As of Spring 2014 we are one of the ESC’s newest groups. We’re excited to foster a safe space for all groups of people to explore our culture through this supportive organization.
10. How can I help the club?

Let people know what Hmong is! Attending and supporting the group with anything from manning a bake sale to hanging flyers is helpful, too, of course. We’re thankful for your help.

WHSA Feature Pitch Letter

Dear Kara Spencer and Nick Belcaster:

Courage, initiative, and motivation are what it took for Khou Moua to break out from her family trend and attend a university.

Being the first one in her family to ever attend college and seek higher education, it was a tough learning curve for Moua. As she paved her own way through student loans, financial aid, registration for classes, and much more, she recognized a need to help those in her same situation.

Moua is Hmong.

What IS Hmong? Is it the name for Mongolian people? A type of food or music?

Hmong is an ethnic Asian group from areas of China, Thailand, Laos, and Vietnam. the state population to 2,404. If you look around Western, however, you'll only find 14 Hmong students. And Western has the largest student body of Hmong students in the state. Khou Moua co-founded a group in 2012 to bring support around her fellow minority students. She knew no one when she came to Western, and was able to go from loneliness to president of her ethnic identity's first campus group.

Only 17 percent of Hmong individuals go on to receive a bachelor's degree or any form of higher education. Moua wanted to impact this number for the better. Her father is currently unemployed and her mother works very hard as a janitor in her hometown. Moua's motivation is deep rooted, as she wants a better life for herself and her future family.

After coming to Western, she began to work with the group of Hmong students to officially form a club. The purpose was to begin spreading awareness of the Hmong culture, but more importantly, to encourage Hmong students in grade school to attend college and further their education.

Moua's passion for the Hmong people and for the subject exudes from her. As President of the Western Hmong Student Association (WHSA) she has led the club to reach out to younger students to motivate them to come to college and helps answer questions she had when she began but struggled finding the answers.

College Night is an event that WHSA puts on annually in Kirkland, Wash. Each year Moua and a group of other club members make the trek from Bellingham to Kirkland to meet with Hmong high school students. They are not paid for their services, but rather are

motivated from the passion they have to help younger Hmong students progress with their education and feel as though they have a safe place to ask questions and find answers.

Rickey Chang, Vice President of WHSA, would be an excellent contact and could provide more insight into Moua's influence on the Hmong culture at Western. Villay Lee, Budget Coordinator of WHSA, would also be an excellent contact. Moua's parents would be interesting to talk to as well, however, I have not received their contact information. I have included contact information for Chang, Moua, and Lee at the bottom of the letter. For art, images of a meeting at WHSA could be taken or at their College Night event in November depending on when the story is run. Maybe Moua would be able to provide a photo of her and her family in order to tell her story better.

CONTACTS:

Khou Moua: President of WHSA: mouak@students.wvu.edu

Rickey Chang: Vice President of WHSA: 206-419-8223

Villay Lee: Budget Coordinator of WHSA: leev8@students.wvu.edu

Thank you for your time and consideration,

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