

# DLMP Heritage Appreciation - Lunar New Year

*Nguyen-Luan Nguyen (Pronounced or "Nuh-Win" or "Win"), Administrative Assistant in the Clinical Administrative Support Team (CAST) here at the DLMP. He graduated with a B.A. Degree in Mathematics and Minor in Applied Mathematics from UW in 2013. He is the youngest of 3 Sons of Immigrate Parents who were Married during Vietnam War, who travel to India (Oldest Brother born there), Belgium (2nd Oldest Brother Born) and America (where Nguyen was born). His mother is a Retired Certified Pharmacy Technician, and his father is Mechanist at Boeing in Paine Field.*



**KAREEM HOSNY, MD, MPH**  
INTERVIEWER

We had the pleasure of interviewing Nguyen-Luan Nguyen for our Lunar New Year Celebration and learning about his personal journey.  
**Kareem Hosny:** Good afternoon, Nguyen. How are you today?

**Nguyen-Luan Nguyen:** I'm doing well, thank you for asking, Dr. Hosny.

**Kareem Hosny:** Thank you so much for being with me today. It's a special day, actually, because I personally love celebrating the Lunar New Year. It's fascinating to see how different cultures celebrate it. I would love if you could tell us a little bit more about yourself.

**Nguyen-Luan Nguyen:** A little bit about me: my journey has been quite diverse. I've been working at UW Med for about a year and a half now, approximately 18 months. My educational background includes being alumni of UW, class of 2013, with a degree in mathematics. Initially, I was quite passionate about becoming an electrical engineer, drawn to STEM fields generally. However, the competition in that field was intense, and I had to consider my parents' <https://dlmp.uw.edu/about/diversity>

situation especially their approaching retirement and health issues. It led me to the decision to finish my degree and then start seeking employment as soon as possible. Finding a job wasn't easy, but it's been a journey of growth and perseverance. I began my career with my first proper job at IKEA in Renton, which by the way was the second largest IKEA store nationally at that time. Then I was on Child Care filed, during my five years, I gained a lot of valuable experience which prepared me for where I am now. Over the last five years, I've worked my way through various positions, eventually becoming the program director and now part of the clinical administrative support team here at DLMP.

**Kareem Hosny:** Wow, that's really impressive. I'm curious, could you tell me more about your personal and professional journey? For instance, what types of work have you been doing recently?

**Nguyen-Luan Nguyen:** Certainly. My work, while I'm officially an assistant, is crucial to the operations at UW DLMP.



Our office holds a significant role within the organization. My tasks often involve assisting our payroll specialists, who handle invoicing. Given UW Med's massive scale, involving numerous locations and a vast testing apparatus, it's paramount to manage our finances wisely. We often outsource testing to reference labs, such as UCLA, when internal workloads are too high. My job centers around accurately managing these invoices, ensuring that costs align with our set budgets. This financial accuracy is key to maintaining fluid monetary flow necessary for research funding, resources, equipment, or even recruitment.

**Kareem Hosny:** That sounds like a challenging yet rewarding role. I'm curious, what attracted you to your current position at DLMP, and how did the organizational landscape appear when you joined?

*“ For me, Lunar New Year is the actual beginning of the year. It brings good luck and possibilities”*

**Nguyen-Luan Nguyen:** To take a step back, what initially drew me to DLMP was a desire to transition from my previous career path, which was in child care. I felt like I had reached a limit in that field and needed a healthier work-life balance and mainly to ensure less physical strain and more personal time. I'm in my 30s, and at that point, finding balance was crucial, especially as I juggled family responsibilities. My mother underwent knee surgery in 2022, which prompted a reevaluation of priorities.

This job shift wasn't solely for personal gain but also a means to better support my family while maintaining community engagement. Despite moving from child-centric work, the essence of aiding individuals remained, manifesting in healthcare, where I feel I contribute to patients. It also ties back to my upbringing—despite challenges, my family's resilience taught me to persist and enhance my surroundings, which further motivated me to accept this role. I was fortunate to receive guidance from one of my mom's former coworkers, who pointed me toward this opportunity.

Since joining the DLMP, the environment has evolved. I witnessed some high staff turnover, which, although challenging, offered insights into departmental needs and the importance of interdepartmental support. I've seen improvement, especially with staff numbers and resources, but it's an ongoing process. Notably, the construction of the Renton lab signifies potential major changes in our workflow, introducing uncertainty about our roles and how they might evolve.

**Kareem Hosny:** Your journey is truly compelling. I'm glad you brought up your family, especially your mother, as I wanted to ask about any mentors who've supported you. You mentioned her as a significant influence

**Nguyen-Luan Nguyen:** Yes, my mother has indeed been a significant influence, as has my father. My mom was a certified pharmacy technician, working diligently across two jobs — during my youth at Virginia Mason and Group Health's Capitol Hill location. Her work ethic deeply inspired me, as did my father's. My parents' journey, starting with their marriage during the Vietnam War and fleeing to India instead of more common destinations like Singapore or the USA, exemplifies resilience and adaptability. They taught us the value of hard work and making the best of challenging situations, instilling perseverance that has been crucial in my life. Reflecting on their experiences, moving due to war, adapting to new cultures, and maintaining dignity in adversity influences me profoundly.

I remain empathetic to those in war-torn regions today, knowing my parents aimed to give us a life far removed from such strife. Growing up, we didn't have much, but my parents' sacrifices ensured we recognized the significance of our heritage and endeavors. I aim to honor their legacy by supporting my nieces and nephews, instilling similar values of hard work and appreciation for family and community.

**Kareem Hosny:** Listening to you, Nguyen, I'm deeply moved. Your family's story of perseverance is powerful and underscores the significance of cultural heritage and support in your journey. How do you see your role in representing these values at UW and within the DLMP community?

**Nguyen-Luan Nguyen:** Thank you for your kind words, Dr. Hosny. My role, both at UW and within my community, inherently ties to my identity as an Asian American and, more specifically, as a Vietnamese American. My mother encouraged embracing our heritage, evident in my name, which carries significant cultural meaning. While I wasn't born in Vietnam, our cultural connection remains strong.

Throughout life, our family's diverse experiences, from India to Belgium before settling here, shaped our open-mindedness toward all cultures. I can't always pinpoint explicit actions I take to represent my community within UW, but I strive to engage with and respect all cultures. This diversity in my social circles—from various African, European, Latin, and Asian ethnicities regardless of Orientation—affirms my belief in creating inclusive communities. At UW, and specifically in DLMP, I aim to embody this diversity, extending compassion and understanding while building bridges among varied ethnic groups.

**Kareem Hosny:** That's incredibly heartwarming. Your commitment to your culture and community is admirable. Are there any particular challenges or achievements in your path that have deeply impacted you?

**Nguyen-Luan Nguyen:** Reflecting on both challenges and achievements, one significant moment was the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. Its impact was profound, and brought grief to many. Personally, in December 2020, I contracted COVID-19, which spiraled into long-term side effects that persist today. My sense of taste and smell was severely affected, which ended up causing my lack of

sensation in the limbs regardless of temperature, which was quite distressing. Despite these challenges, I remain thankful for the support from colleagues and my community as I navigated these health struggles. It also reinforced the value of empathy and understanding, qualities my work demands every day. Professionally, I'm grateful for the supportive environment at UW, which has been instrumental in my adjustment and ongoing health management. Emotionally, COVID's presence reshaped my life perceptions, emphasizing the importance of resilience and adaptability—qualities mirroring my parents' teachings.

**Kareem Hosny:** Thank you for sharing, Nguyen. Your openness about COVID-19's impact is crucial and resonates deeply. Transitioning slightly, could you tell me what the Lunar New Year means to you? What traditions or foods does your family enjoy during this time?

**Nguyen-Luan Nguyen:** Certainly. Lunar New Year is incredibly special, embodying the spirit and core of our culture. It symbolizes new beginnings and is a time of hope and renewal. For my family and many in the Vietnamese community, this time involves preparing traditional foods like the special rice cakes we steam in banana leaves and bamboo. These treats, enjoyed particularly during the New Year, represent prosperity, good fortune, and respect for our heritage.

For me, I know lunar year is different than the calendar we use. For most Asian cultures, new year doesn't start with the formal calendar. Lunar New Year is the actual beginning. And it is our holiday because everybody has a holiday. My family reflects on this day as a new start that bring good luck and possibility. Additionally, this year is excited for me because it is the snake year and this is when I was born.

**Kareem Hosny:** Thank you, Nguyen, for this engaging and insightful conversation. Your journey and experiences, particularly how they connect with broader cultural narratives, are truly inspiring.

**Nguyen-Luan Nguyen:** Thank you, Dr. Hosny, for this opportunity to share my story. It's been a pleasure engaging with you today.

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