As many college students consider studying abroad next school year, Loyola University Chicago has distinguished itself by becoming the only U.S. university to have a license for education in Vietnam.

This new accreditation means that the Vietnam Center has been evaluated as a legitimate educational institution by Vietnam education officials and is seen as teaching an acceptable curriculum.

"We're in a unique position," said Amye Day, study abroad advisor with the Office of International Programs. "There aren't a huge number of Americans studying abroad in Vietnam, so companies are thrilled to have American students working with them. It's seen as a win-win."

Starting with a pilot program in the summer of 2009, Loyola has offered students the opportunity to study abroad in Ho Chi Minh City in Vietnam, one of the most rapidly developing countries in the world. The program is unique in its service-learning component.

Loyola students studying abroad with the Vietnam program have the opportunity to take different classes in Vietnamese language, literature, economics and environmental biology. All students must take UNIV 292 - The Culture and Politics of Development in Contemporary Vietnam, a CORE-fulfilling class that requires participation in a service-placement or unpaid internship with a local business.

"This is an unparalleled opportunity for American students studying in Vietnam," Day said. "It's a true immersion experience."

Students have the opportunity to choose from all-day service learning programs such as the East Meets West Foundation, Center for Biodiversity and Development, Education for Development or Wildlife at Risk.

Those participating in the program live in a guesthouse located in the central area of the city and have the option to live with a Vietnamese roommate from Loyola's partner institution, the University of Social Sciences and Humanities.

"I really think this would be a great experience," said Christina Reckard, an 18-year-old freshman nursing major. "This program really reflects Loyola's efforts to incorporate diversity and give students opportunities throughout other countries."

Loyola's new educational accreditation will be of enormous benefit to students who choose to study in Vietnam - including those studying international business, humanities, social justice or those looking to participate in an exceptional study abroad program.
"It's really becoming the hot new place," Day said. "There are a lot of exciting activities happening [in Vietnam]."

Those interested in studying abroad in Vietnam should contact Amye Day at aday1@luc.edu.