

**Seven Spirits Kung Fu - Press Release**  
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Students of Cornell University in Ithaca, NY have founded a new martial arts school, Seven Spirits Kungfu, centered around Vietnamese martial arts, philosophy, and tradition.

The history of Seven Spirits Kungfu began when Tran Khai Hoai arrived at Cornell University for graduate study this past September. Hoai soon met many fellow students and faculty at the university who were interested in Asian philosophy and martial arts. Luckily, Thien Su Bao Thanh, had recently evaluated Hoai's skills after the Wong 2003 National Kung Fu Tournament in Washington, DC, and consented Hoai's intent to open up a Vietnamese martial arts school at Cornell. Dedicated students quickly helped found the Seven Spirits Kungfu organization—with twenty new members.

On the commencement of the new school, Hoai said, "By founding the Seven Spirits Kungfu School, we hope to share with others a tradition that is rich in history and meaning. I believe that it touches on many aspects of life; it is in not just about martial arts. For us, kungfu is merely a tool, a method by which we may develop compassion and live our lives to help others. At Seven Spirits Kungfu, the door is always open. Anyone can gain from our tradition. We do not wish to merely create a new 'Viet' martial arts school—that is a pitfall of modern nationalism and separatism. While Seven Spirits Kungfu evolved out of the Vietnamese people, the teachings are universal and we hope to share them with everyone interested in our tradition and art."

The new school is called Vo Duong Vo Than Thien Dao, or the School of Martial Spirit and the Way. The name of the art itself is That Son Than Quyen (Seven Mountain Spirits Fist), which reflects the origins of the tradition: the That Son mountains along the Cambodian border in Vietnam. Seven Spirits Kungfu may be considered an "internal" art, emphasizing Noi Cong, Khi Cong and other breathing methods in addition to fighting techniques. Its movements are styled after seven animal spirits: Tiger, Crane, Snake, Hawk, Monkey, Dragon, and Phoenix. The philosophy of the art draws on Vietnamese Thien (Zen) and mystic Daoism, whose ultimate goals are peace and self-discovery.

Seven Spirits Kungfu teaches philosophy, culture, and martial spirit in class sessions held on the Cornell campus. Already, many students are enjoying their learning experience and are happy to participate in the tradition.

One student, Elliott Bäck commented: "The organization is more personal than a class, and is more learning-oriented and casual than one would think for a martial arts club. There is a good sense of warmth and friendship in our organization. It's a lot of fun, and very good for both body and mind."

Shuo-wen Hu, another member of Seven Spirits Kungfu added: "Learning kungfu has already improved my balance, physically and also mentally to some degree. I believe I have also found a hobby in kungfu. The club is really like a small community with people that share your interests. I consider all the members friends; after all kungfu is not only about fighting, but also about friendship and having fun."

In the coming year, the Seven Spirits Kungfu School hopes to be active in their local community through charitable and cultural-awareness events. This is all part of Seven Spirits Kungfu's efforts to apply their martial training to the "living world." As Hoai teaches, "Even if your technique is perfect and your enlightenment complete, if you fail to ease the sufferings of others and touch the lives of others in a positive way, then all your training has been a waste and for naught."

In the same light, the tradition is open to everyone. As another student put it, "Seven Spirits Kungfu is fun, and very good for both body and mind. Also, anyone can come to the classes and learn. You don't have to be in a certain physical condition, or spiritually enlightened as long as you're willing to learn and try."

Seven Spirits Kungfu currently offers free instruction three times a week at Cornell University. For more information please visit <http://www.rso.cornell.edu/sevenspirits/> or email [dn45@cornell.edu](mailto:dn45@cornell.edu).