

Case 64

Clare Boothe Luce Program

Henry R. Luce Foundation, 1987

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Background. Born in 1904, Clare Boothe Luce never attended college. Yet she became a noted writer, actor, and playwright. She was also the U.S. Ambassador to Italy and the first woman from Connecticut elected to the United States Congress. Throughout her life, Mrs. Luce was concerned about the challenges women face pursuing education and career aspirations. And upon her death, she created a major vehicle for the advancement of women in higher education.

Strategy. The Clare Boothe Luce Program was preceded, in 1987, by a fund given by the Henry R. Luce Foundation, named for Clare's late husband, the publisher of *Time*, *Life*, and *Fortune* magazines. The fund, itself named for Mrs. Luce, granted two-year visiting professorships to outstanding female scholars at four universities: Yale, Columbia, Brown, and NYU. The fund was created after the Luce Foundation in the mid-1980s conducted a study of women in higher education. The report showed a huge gender gap. Women at the time comprised more than half the nation's undergraduates and a third of its Ph.D.s, yet they held only 12 percent of all tenured positions at public and private universities.⁹⁵⁸ At the most prestigious major research universities, the proportion of all tenured positions held by women was even lower—just 5 percent.⁹⁵⁹

The study and professorships were the Foundation's first steps, but when Clare Luce died, later that year, she expanded dramatically the Foundation's role. Mrs. Luce left \$70 million for the Foundation to create—in perpetuity—funds for at least thirteen universities to give undergraduate scholarships, graduate fellowships, and “term support for tenure-track appointments at the assistant or associate professorship level.”⁹⁶⁰ The awards are made to promising women pursuing careers in the sciences, mathematics, and engineering. Mrs. Luce hoped “to encourage women to enter, study, graduate, and teach” in these, the fields where they are historically least represented.⁹⁶¹

Outcomes. Over the past sixteen years, the Clare Boothe Luce Program has awarded fellowships for over 800 undergraduates and 390 graduate students, as well as 137 Clare Boothe Luce professorships.⁹⁶² These prestigious awards have benefited 114 four-year institutions, in addition to the thirteen original designates.

Impact. According to Robert E. Armstrong, then vice president and executive director of the Luce Foundation,⁹⁶³ the Clare Boothe Luce Program was intended “to cause these [recipient] institutions to look harder for qualified women candidates than they have done in the past instead of settling for the first qualified male applicant.”⁹⁶⁴ Since its creation, the Clare Boothe Luce Program has been the single largest source “of private support for women in science, engineering, and mathematics.”⁹⁶⁵ It continues serving as the major source of private support for a gradual reduction in the long-standing disparity between the numbers of men and women in American higher education.

Notes

958. Kathleen Teltsch, “Luce Fund Offering Aid to Scholarly Women,” *New York Times*, 1/31/1987.

959. *Ibid.*

960. Available from <http://www.hluce.org>.

961. Kathleen Teltsch, “Mrs. Luce Left \$70 Million for Women's Science Education,” *New York Times*, 7/2/1989.

962. Available from <http://www.hluce.org>.

963. Mr. Armstrong is still a member of the Foundation's Board of Directors.

964. Teltsch, “Mrs. Luce Left \$70 Million for Women's Science Education.”

965. Available from <http://www.hluce.org>.