



Rare Promise

A Brief History of Scholarships at Stanford

2014



“...keeping open an avenue whereby the deserving and exceptional may rise through their own efforts.”

JANE STANFORD

It Started with a Boy



In 1877, Leland Stanford, Jr., opened an account at the Security Savings Bank of San Francisco. He was 8 years old. His initial deposit was \$100.

What might young Leland have wanted that money could buy? He was after all the sole heir to one of the greatest private fortunes on Earth. Perhaps he was simply practicing the habit of thrift, for he continued to add a few dollars at a time from his allowance of \$10 per month and the 25 cents an hour that he earned doing odd jobs.

When Leland died at age 15 of typhoid, the balance in his account stood at \$1,146.79. As his grieving parents worked to build a university in memory of their only child, Leland's interest continued to accrue. By 1900, when the university was 9 years old, and his father too had passed away, Leland Jr.'s savings account had accumulated \$2,236.52. Jane Stanford decided to use her son's money to create the Leland Stanford Junior Memorial Scholarship.

This was Stanford University's first scholarship fund. It covered room, board, and fees (the university did not charge tuition until 1920). Mrs. Stanford also selected a choice room in Encina Hall, at that time a dormitory, for the boy receiving the scholarship. She had written earlier, in the university's Founding Grant:

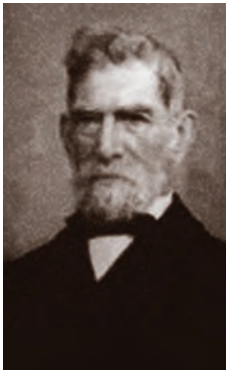
“THE UNIVERSITY HAS BEEN ENDOWED WITH A VIEW OF OFFERING INSTRUCTION FREE, OR NEARLY FREE, THAT IT MAY RESIST THE TENDENCY TO THE STRATIFICATION OF SOCIETY, BY KEEPING OPEN AN AVENUE WHEREBY THE DESERVING AND EXCEPTIONAL MAY RISE THROUGH THEIR OWN EFFORTS FROM THE LOWEST TO THE HIGHEST STATIONS IN LIFE.”

In some respects, a scholarship fund was the finishing touch on this institution, which the Stanfords had begun to create when they resolved “the children of California shall be our children.” In other ways, that fund was just a beginning, a seed planted deep within the university.



PHOTO: Madden Library, California State University, Fresno

As the West Grew



For more than a decade, the Leland Stanford Junior Memorial Scholarship was the only such fund at the university. But as California grew, others added to the Stanfords' legacy. W. J. Dickey, the first person outside the family to endow a scholarship at the university, had arrived in Fresno, California, in 1877. At that time, the town was little more than a railroad station, a few houses, a saloon, and some stores, one of which hired the 24-year-old Dickey as a clerk.

Dickey prospered, building a fortune in real estate, oil, and banking. Like the Stanfords, he was a civic-minded philanthropist. After his death, in 1912, his estate provided \$10,000 to Stanford University to endow a scholarship fund, which was meant to help students from Fresno County. Over the years, that single fund has helped more than 100 students.

Dickey endowed a scholarship partly because he admired Governor Stanford and the Stanfords' model of philanthropy. In due course, Dickey himself would serve as a model for other donors. One recipient of a Dickey Scholarship was Frederick Hattrup, '35. In 1986, recalling that his benefactor's fund had been restricted to men, he and his wife established the Hattrup Scholarship Fund for women from Fresno County.

Again and again, those who received financial aid have paid it forward. Over the decades, they and other Stanford alumni, parents, and friends have created more than 1,260 named scholarship funds. The total value of all those funds is \$1.7 billion at this writing. Annually they provide more than \$80 million in support. They have supported more than 49,000 individual students at Stanford, not including the thousands who receive financial aid through annual giving.

In addition to changing students' lives, these scholarships have shaped the character of the institution.



PHOTO: Jill Clardy

A Rare Promise

Today, few American colleges and universities admit students based solely on their talents and potential, regardless of their ability to pay tuition. Even fewer institutions can back up need-blind admission with the promise to meet students' need for financial aid. Stanford is one.

Keeping this rare promise stands among the university's greatest achievements and dearest hopes. This promise—so utterly fundamental to the history and destiny of Stanford—depends upon the commitment of scholarship donors.

In 2013, the W. J. Dickey Scholarship Fund marked its 100th anniversary. How long can it continue? Two hundred years? A thousand? That kind of ivy-covered thinking seems at odds with the spirit of Stanford, a Western institution where the innovations of a decade change the way things have been done for centuries. On the other hand, why should gifts wisely directed not live for millennia?

We may not know any better than Leland Stanford, Jr., precisely who will benefit from the funds we set aside. But we may dream, as Jane Stanford dreamed, when she wrote:

“THROUGH ALL THESE YEARS, I HAVE KEPT A MENTAL PICTURE BEFORE ME. I COULD SEE A HUNDRED YEARS AHEAD WHEN ALL THE PRESENT TRIALS WERE FORGOTTEN, AND ALL OF THE PRESENT ACTIVE PARTIES GONE, AND NOTHING REMAINING BUT THE INSTITUTION. I COULD SEE BEYOND ALL THIS THE CHILDREN'S CHILDREN'S CHILDREN COMING HERE FROM THE EAST, THE WEST, THE NORTH, AND THE SOUTH.”

Just as she envisioned, the institution that began when her son's life ended, with all of the resources others have added to it, continues to grow, changing more lives than anyone now alive will ever know.

The impact of Stanford scholarship funds is written in the lives of generation after generation: those who teach, heal, govern, raise children, create companies and poems, those who invent, fight for justice, entertain, and explore—and those who give in turn the gift of education so that it is always passed on.

May scholarship donors and scholarship recipients forever come together to Stanford, drawn by their hunger for learning, their desire for opportunity, and their joy in swinging wide the doors of a great university.