



Vira Heinz hiking on Catalina Island 1923

Vira I. Heinz travel program

The Vira I. Heinz (VIH) Program for Women in Global Leadership supports and encourages a passion for life-long learning and civic engagement among first-time, underrepresented female-identifying students in the broader Pittsburgh region, across 16 partner universities in Pennsylvania, Ohio and West Virginia. In addition to a scholarship of at least \$5,000 toward a summer global experience of their choosing, program awardees also participate in community engagement and leadership development activities, and they maximize cultural learnings abroad while preparing to invest in and lead their own communities upon return.

This unique program began with Vira I. Heinz herself in 1954. Moved by the life-changing power of foreign travel, the widow of H.J. Heinz's son Clifford and the first woman to serve on the board of the H.J. Heinz Co. began giving \$1,000 personal checks to cover the costs of sending female University of Pittsburgh students to Europe for the summer. The larger public notoriety from Vira's involvement helped end gender-based inequities in travel-study opportunities for women generally. Her vision has since bridged critical gaps not only for those first

recipients but also for today's scholars, who hail from a diverse range of identities in terms of race and ethnicity as well as socio-economic background, abilities and gender and sexuality. This model of combining overseas study with leadership development and community service has also spread to other study-abroad programs seeking to address shortcomings in inclusive recruitment and meaningful outcomes.

In the tradition of the Heinz family's commitment to providing resources to allow people to better themselves, the VIH Program has grown from a singular travel experience to a robust scholarship through which recipients can add depth to a major course of study, test a possible career choice or find solutions to acute challenges at home. Three Heinz Endowments board members—Judith Davenport, Wendy Mackenzie and Shirley Malcom—recognized the potential of this cultural and education program to more deliberately incubate future women leaders. They worked with staff to retool the original legacy travel scholarship, which was relaunched in 2008 in its current form as a competitive leadership-development initiative. The mentoring, supervision and in-person retreats that accompany the scholarship and travel further support participants' growth into local leaders with international experience.

Though Europe is still a popular destination, trips to Cuba, Russia, Mongolia and Nigeria have also been approved, and the program prioritizes global perspectives among its other established values of self-knowledge, valuing others, integrity and accountability. Program alumnae are poised for success in not only post-secondary education but also as responsible citizens and leaders at home. Among The Heinz Endowments' myriad investments in post-secondary education, the VIH Program remains a signature opportunity for students to realize academic, professional and personal goals in line with our overarching mission to invest in the leaders of a more durable, whole and just future.