Gift to Help College Open Doors for Immigrants

Donation of $9 million honors Eva Grove’s commitment to promoting immigrants’ rights

By Melanie Grayce West
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To celebrate her 80th birthday, Eva Kastan Grove’s family wanted to give a gift to Hunter College students.

The donation of $9 million to Hunter, part of the City University of New York, will honor Mrs. Grove’s lifelong interest in promoting the rights of immigrants. It follows several other smaller gifts to the school made from the family’s foundation. Mrs. Grove is the wife of Andrew Grove, the former chairman of Intel. Mrs. Grove graduated from Hunter in 1958 with a degree in pre-social work. Born in Vienna, she was 3 years old when her family fled the Nazis. She was raised in Bolivia. Mrs. Grove arrived in New York City at the age of 18 and found Hunter to be an enlightening, diverse place, she said. She was a member of the Spanish club and a sorority, Alpha Gamma Delta. She worked in the book room and relished the apples from the vending machine.

“Hunter opened the doors to America for me,” she said.

As Mrs. Grove’s daughters considered how to honor their mother, said daughter Robie Spector, they repeatedly came back to their mother’s commitments to advocacy and social service, as well as a commitment to immigrants’ rights and dignity. Both Mrs. Grove and her husband are immigrants; he emigrated to the U.S. from Hungary in 1957.

As for the size of the gift, the daughters thought they should give the college “a bit more” than usual for the milestone birthday, said Ms. Spector. “My father said, ‘Let’s give them a lot more.’”

Part of the grant, $4 million, will establish a scholars program at Hunter’s Roosevelt House and support a variety of student activities and programs in public policy and human rights. Roosevelt House is a place where Mrs. Grove spent many hours as an undergraduate, but now serves as a hub for students with an interest in social justice and human rights.

The remainder of the grant, $5 million, will go toward scholarships and funding internships. Preference will primarily go to students who are, among other things, immigrants or children of immigrants, or who are undocumented. The internship grants to students are especially important because they allow for many students to take on an unpaid position at a nongovernmental organization or nonprofit, a critical step in getting a foot in the door to a career, said Hunter’s president, Jennifer J. Raab. Mrs. Grove’s time at Hunter had one other serendipitous moment—at the job-placement center.

It was there that Mrs. Grove was given a lead on a summer job at a hotel in the Catskills. Mr.
Grove, a student at City College, also part of the City University of New York, was given the same referral. She was a waitress and he a busboy. They married shortly after graduating from college.
According to their daughter, Ms. Spector, Mr. Grove still carries in his wallet a portrait of Mrs. Grove taken while she was a student at Hunter.