

2021 Duke Luce Recommendations

The Luce Scholars Program is a nationally competitive fellowship program. It was launched by the Henry Luce Foundation in 1974 to enhance the understanding of Asia among potential leaders in American society. The program provides stipends, language training, and individualized professional placement in Asia for 15-18 Luce Scholars each year, and welcomes applications from college seniors, graduate students, and young professionals in a variety of fields who have had limited exposure to Asia.

The intent of the program is to provide an immersion experience in Asia for an outstanding group of young Americans who would not otherwise have the opportunity to come to know Asia intimately. Those who already have significant experience in Asia or Asian studies are not eligible.

To be successful, candidates must demonstrate an outstanding capacity for leadership, have a record of high achievement, and have mature and clearly defined career interests with evidence of potential for professional accomplishments. All fields will be considered.

The Luce Scholars Program is experiential rather than academic in nature. Personal qualities such as flexibility, adaptability, creativity, humility, openness to new ideas, and sensitivity to cultural differences are as important as academic achievement. Duke is allowed to nominate 3 students per year.

NCS-OUSF Advice on writing Luce recommendations

As you see from the criteria above, Luce is looking for resilient, flexible applicants with a fairly clear idea of where they are heading. As with most of the foundations, they want to invest in students who will be leaders in their respective fields. Your job is to paint as clear a picture as you can as to why you believe that the student will benefit from the opportunity to add an experiential year in Asia to the education they have received at Duke.

We suggest that before you begin, you reflect on how you believe the student fits the criteria of the Luce scholarship. You may want to talk with the student about what they think you can speak about in the letter—why did they choose you?

A good letter of recommendation for Luce is at least one and ½ pages and usually, we find that two pages are sufficient, but that in some cases that are well documented you may need additional space.

But, what goes into all that space? Luce is looking for students they can place in jobs in Asia—with little to no language training—who will be flexible enough and courageous enough to thrive in the environment and not embarrass the foundation. A unique individual. Your job is to tell them the story of your candidate from YOUR point of view. The best letters use anecdotes to illustrate the points you are trying to make. If you claim Johnny is brilliant—how did he perform in class relative to other students, what was brilliant about the paper he wrote, the argument he made or the experiment he proposed? If you claim that Suzy will cure cancer in her lifetime, what tendencies show that she has the perseverance to get the job done?

These are hard letters to write, but the Office of Nationally Competitive Scholarships is here to assist you—send us drafts, we are happy to look at them. We will look closely at your letter and let you know if we find typos or other corrections prior to the final submission.

We do urge you to consider carefully before you agree to write the letter. You are not required to write for every student that asks—only those for whom you believe you can make a good case

If at any time you have questions or concerns about a student in the process, please contact either Babs Wise (babs@duke.edu) or Bevin Tighe (bevin.t@duke.edu)

Please note: All students have waived their rights to see your letters. Additionally, it is against OUSF policy to accept letters originally authored by students. We need the letter to be from you.

Further Resources:

Strong Recommendations from Inside Higher Ed: <http://bit.ly/stronger-letters>

Process for Luce Recommendations

Action	Comment	Date
Receive a request from a student to write a recommendation	Each student applying for the Luce needs three letters of recommendation = due to NCS September 28 .	Summer
Decide whether or not you are able to write the letter	Students should supply you with a resume, a conversation about what they are applying for and why, and papers they have written for you. YOU make the decision on whether or not you have the time to help the student's application or not.	ASAP
Letter submitted to OUSF	The letter should be saved as a pdf, on letterhead, complete with signature. And emailed to ncs-ousf@duke.edu .	September 28
OUSF submits the application package to Luce		October 29
Preliminary Interview	All Luce candidates have an in person interview	November-December
Finalist Interview	Selected candidates have a final day long interview	Early February
Scholars Named		March