

## Posse scholarship makes college dream a reality

January 18, 2013 4:00 AM Barri Bronston

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Krishell Johnson of Marrero, La., always dreamed of attending Tulane University but knew that the only way she could afford it was by doing well in high school and praying that scholarship money came her way.



Krishell Johnson of Marrero, La., follows her dream of attending Tulane University, along with nine other students in her “posse.” (Photo by Paula Burch-Celentano)

Enter the [Posse Foundation](#), an acclaimed scholarship program that opened its eighth site in New Orleans last year. Johnson was one of 10 local high school seniors who won a full-tuition Posse scholarship to Tulane, and since enrolling in August, she can't imagine being anywhere else.

“It's academically challenging, but I'm glad I'm here,” says Johnson, a first-year student in Newcomb-Tulane College. “I really like the environment.”

Posse is not just any scholarship program. Founded in 1989, the program recruits and trains young leaders from urban high schools and sends them in teams, or posses, to top colleges across the United States.

They begin training while still in high school, learning such skills as team-building

and leadership development. The idea is that when they begin college, they have a built-in support system, along with mentors, to help them transition to campus life.

“It was surprising to them to find out how much Tulane is different from the rest of the city, with so many people from other places,” says Posse adviser [Beretta Smith-Shomade](#), an associate professor and chair of the Tulane Department of Communication. “But overall, I think they've adjusted fine.”

Smith-Shomade meets with the group once a week and with students individually twice a month. “We talk about academics, the dynamic of their own posse, what's working socially and what's not. These students are very close to one another.”

Johnson said Smith-Shomade is the “perfect” mentor, and her “posse” couldn't be friendlier or more supportive. “I have nine other people that I came here with, so I never feel like I'm on my own.”