

Close-knit Posse scholars finish year one at Tulane

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First-year Posse scholars from the New Orleans area are among the 59 students in the Posse program ? which also include students from Los Angeles ? currently enrolled at Tulane. Back row, from left: Oscar Tamayo, Mariam Mohammad, Aurelien Barnes and Gabriel Rodriguez; front row, from left: Kayla Jackson, Yasmin Davis, Peter Nguyen and Farhana Chaudhry; not pictured: Mohammed Elaasar and Jasmine Williams. (Photo by Paula Burch-Celentano)

A group of students from around the New Orleans area arrived this academic year at Tulane University as a posse. The close-knit yet diverse flock of 10 has found, for the most part, that the [Posse Foundation program](#) that brought them to Tulane has worked for them during their first year on campus.

Jasmine Williams says, “We help each other, build each other up ? it's what Posse is supposed to do.”

These students were nominated by their high schools and chosen from an initial pool of 575 applicants. During high school, the [Posse Foundation](#) selected them for their academic and leadership potential, and they were placed in a supportive multicultural team, or Posse, for eight months of pre-collegiate training together. The goal: to arrive on campus prepared to support each other, get involved in

campus organizations, encourage dialogue and succeed academically.

Several in the group say that they could not have come to Tulane without the Posse program. Three are first-generation Americans and four are the first university students in their families.

“Tulane was my dream school,” says Peter Nguyen, a cell and molecular biology major who got a 4.0 in his first semester. Nguyen adds, however, that he believes the atmosphere and community life on campus could be improved upon. He would like to see more diversity.

Others in his Posse agree, and they are working in various ways to embrace and encourage diversity.

“The real minority at Tulane is Arab,” says Mohammed Elaasar, who has become involved with the Muslim Student Organization. “Last semester, we were focused on blending into the crowd to gain acceptance. This semester, our Posse is becoming more active in displaying our diversity.”

Marva Lewis, an associate professor in the Tulane School of Social Work who was assigned to be the mentor for this Posse, says, “I've learned a lot from them.”