

## 11 freshmen come to Penn as a 'posse'

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While most freshmen spend their first days on campus searching for dependable friends, 11 freshmen already have a built-in support system.

Last year, Penn partnered for the first time with The Posse Foundation — a nationwide college admittance and leadership training organization.

After a nearly year-long selection process, 11 students were chosen to attend Penn from urban Miami public schools and matriculated this fall. Though most students entered the class of 2014 independently, these students entered as a “posse.”

President and founder Deborah Bial began the foundation in 1989 after a student who dropped out of college told her that he would have stayed at scho



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Since then, Posse — which recruits socio-economically diverse students from seven urban cities — has striven to ease the transition from an urban upbringing to a competitive university environment by sending students to schools in small groups.

Though Posse has dispatched students to universities all over the country for years, Penn is the foundation’s first Ivy League partner.

The launch of Posse Miami gave Penn certain opportunities, according to Dean of Admissions Eric Furda.

One of the critical considerations was the opportunity to strengthen Penn’s connection with the city of Miami. The city’s growing Latino population was “the driving force” of the partnership, Furda said.

Even before Penn partnered with Posse, Furda traveled to Miami several times to meet with alumni leaders.

“We knew we had a great opportunity to recruit students to Penn from Miami. We just needed a way to do it better,” he said. “Posse made it all come together.”

Bial was equally pleased with the collaboration.

“Under [Penn President] Amy Gutmann’s leadership and Eric Furda’s vision for the admissions office, diversity has been central to the university’s mission,” Bial wrote in an e-mail. “Their commitment to equity and excellence in education should be commended.”

However, no one is more grateful for the Penn program than the Posse members themselves.

“I didn’t know what to expect here and I was worried about meeting new people,” Posse member and College freshman Afuah Frimpong said. “It’s so nice to have 10 other people who I can always talk to.” Having moved to Miami from Haiti just two years ago, Frimpong is not only new to Penn, but also relatively new to the United States.

Out of the 800 student nominations made by Miami public school district faculty last year, these students were chosen through what the foundation calls a “dynamic assessment process.”

Instead of being asked typical interview questions, the participants were challenged to step outside their comfort zones. The tasks they performed ranged from pretending to walk on jello in front of a panel to writing an essay about a challenge they had overcome.

After they were accepted, the posse met weekly to discuss social issues and prepare for college for eight months before arriving on campus. They covered race, gender, how to deal with personality types and how to strengthen peer relationships.

“The pre-collegiate training was life-changing,” Wharton freshman Catalina Arango said. “It helped with college, life in general and even my relationships with family members.”

Now that they’re here, the posse members are glad to have each other for the next four years.

“This is our family on campus,” College freshman Isabella Dominguez said. “Our goal is that we all graduate on the same day, together.”