

POSSE



ALUMMINI

REPORT

THE NEXT



GENERATION

OF LEADERS



CONCEPT

Posse started in 1989 because of one student who said,

"I never would've dropped out of college if I'd had my posse with me."

The Posse Foundation identifies public high school students with extraordinary academic and leadership potential who may be overlooked by traditional college selection processes. The Foundation extends to these students the opportunity to pursue personal and academic excellence by placing them in supportive, multicultural teams—Posses—of 10 students. The Foundation's partner colleges and universities (see page 44) award Posse Scholars full-tuition leadership scholarships.

MISSION

The Posse model works for both students and college campuses and is rooted in the belief that a small, diverse group of talented students—a Posse—carefully selected and trained, can serve as a catalyst for increased individual and community development. As the United States becomes an increasingly multicultural society, Posse believes that the leaders of the 21st century should reflect the country's rich demographic mix. The key to a promising future for our nation rests on the ability of strong leaders from diverse backgrounds to develop consensus solutions to complex social problems. Posse's primary aim is to train these leaders of tomorrow.

PROGRAM COMPONENTS

The Dynamic Assessment Process

Posse's Dynamic Assessment Process (DAP) is a unique evaluation method that identifies young leaders with great potential. Running from September through December each year, DAP finds students who might be missed by the traditional admissions criteria at highly selective schools but who can excel on campus. DAP uses nontraditional forums to evaluate potential, offering nominated students an opportunity to demonstrate their intrinsic leadership ability, their skill at working in a team setting, and their motivation and drive to succeed. DAP has proven to be an extremely effective tool. Using the three-part process, which includes group and individual interviews, Posse staff and partner college administrators ultimately select a diverse group of 10 students—a Posse—for each institution.

Pre-Collegiate Training

Posse's Pre-Collegiate Training (PCT) helps Scholars develop as leaders before they matriculate at college. From January to August of their senior year in high school, newly selected Scholars meet weekly with Posse peers and staff for two-hour workshops that address four areas:

- Academic excellence
- Team building and group support
- Cross-cultural communication
- Leadership and becoming an active agent of change

Campus Program

The four-year Campus Program works to ensure the retention of Posse Scholars and to increase the impact of the program on campus. Posse staff visit each school four times annually for meetings with Scholars, campus liaisons and mentors. During a Posse's first two years on campus, Scholars meet with their mentor weekly as a group and individually every two weeks. Posse also facilitates a weekend-long PossePlus Retreat for each of its partner schools in the spring. Attended by members of the student body, faculty and administration, PossePlus Retreats explore an important social issue identified by Scholars.

Career Program

The Career Program connects Posse Scholars and alumni to highly coveted professional development opportunities. By partnering with industry-leading companies and organizations, establishing affiliations with first-tier graduate schools, and offering world-class career coaching through the PosseNext Fellows Program, the Career Program gives Scholars tools to secure competitive internships and leadership-track jobs in a wide range of fields. The Career Program has five components:

- Internships
- Career Development Workshops
- Career Coaching
- Graduate + Fellowship Programs
- The Alumni Network



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New York City, 1980s

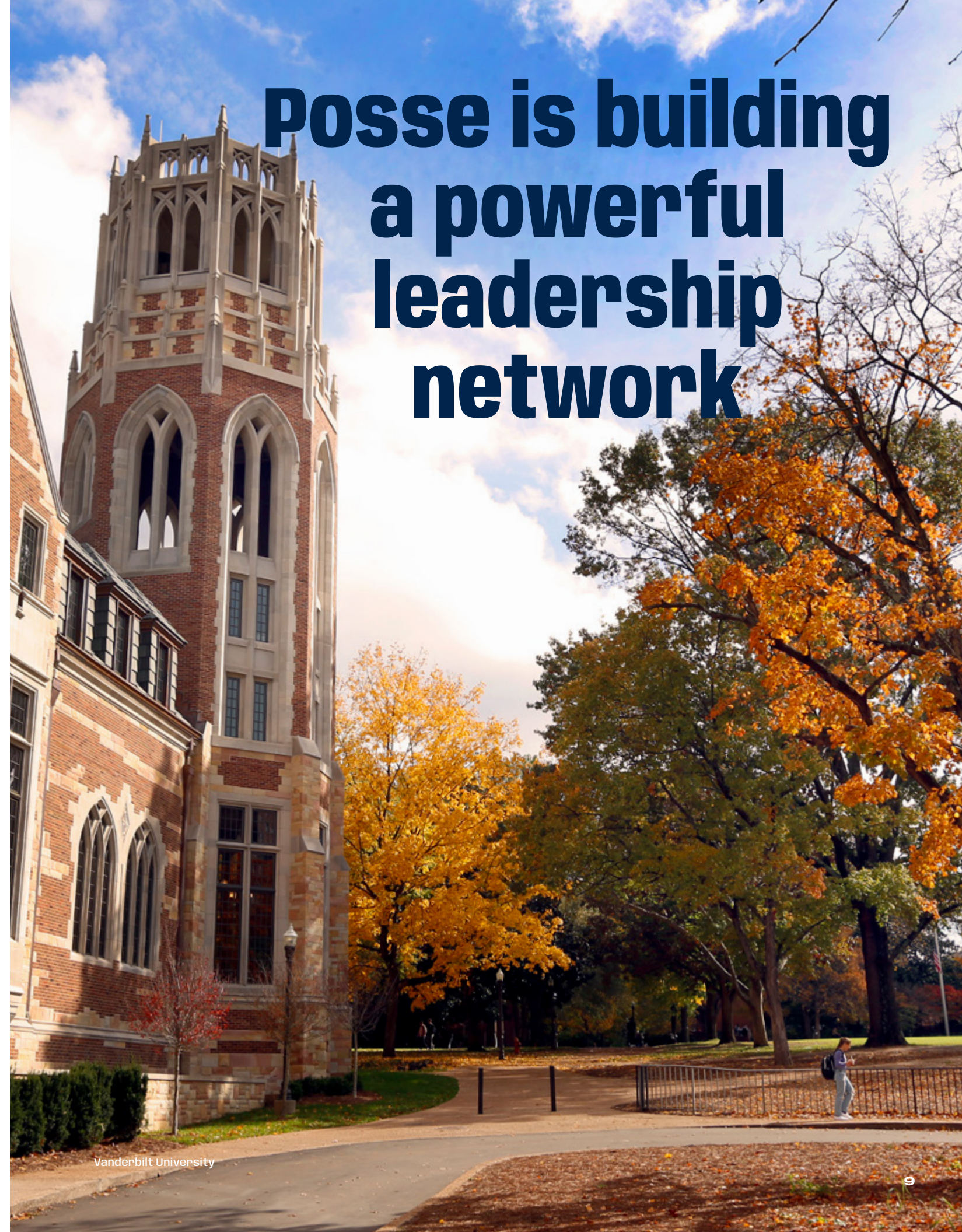
INTRODUCTION

Thirty-seven years ago, The Posse Foundation launched a groundbreaking initiative to build a diverse network of leaders across the United States. Starting with five students from New York and one partner institution—Vanderbilt University—Posse set out to identify, recruit, and train public high school students with extraordinary leadership potential. These young people would hail from the country's largest cities and attend highly selective colleges in teams of 10, or Posse. As alumni, they would enter the workplace well positioned to become leaders in their fields.

Today, The Posse Foundation is fulfilling its goal. More than 9,000 Posse alumni are leading in the workplace and over 3,500 Posse Scholars are currently enrolled on campuses across the country. Posse Scholars have collectively won more than \$2.65 billion in full-tuition scholarships from Posse's 60-plus partner colleges.

By connecting dynamic young leaders from urban backgrounds to educational and professional opportunities that match their potential, Posse is building a unique leadership pipeline—one that better represents the voices of all Americans.

This report provides a description of the Posse alumni network. The pages that follow highlight the many ways Posse alumni are raising their voices, leading inclusively, and having a positive impact on their families, in the workplace, and in society at large.



Vanderbilt University

Posse is building a powerful leadership network

ALUMNI CENSUS

In 2024, The Posse Foundation conducted an online census of its then 8,665 alumni from 10 origin cities: Atlanta, Bay Area, Boston, Chicago, D.C., Houston, Los Angeles, Miami, New Orleans, New York—and from throughout the United States via the Posse Veterans and Virtual programs¹. The census remained open for approximately 12 months and yielded a 51 percent participation rate.

Demographically, alumni who participated in the 2024 census constitute a representative sample. For the most part, group characteristics for census completers are within two percentage points of Posse's overall alumni population. Unless otherwise noted, results throughout this report are from Posse alumni who participated in the 2024 census.

258 alumni served as SGA presidents



Carleton College

UNDERGRADUATE EXPERIENCE

Before matriculating on campus, Scholars participate in an intensive pre-collegiate training program focused on academic excellence, cross-cultural communication, team building and dynamic leadership. On campus, Scholars benefit from programming designed to support their persistence and graduation. This includes regular campus visits by Posse staff, meetings with a faculty mentor, annual retreats, and a variety of career-oriented supports.



Grinnell College Alum and Illinois State Senator Graciela Guzman

LEADERSHIP

Scholars arrive on campus ready to lead. Nearly 85 percent of Posse alumni held a formal leadership role on campus (**CHART 9**). Just over 6 percent were presidents of the student body government, and 53.8 percent founded or were presidents of other student organizations.

Alumni also led in informal ways: tutoring classmates, volunteering on and off campus, and engaging in extracurricular studies within their academic departments. They participated in amazing summer internship opportunities, including the Jeff Ubben Posse Fellows Program, which pairs Scholars with presidents, CEOs, and luminaries in their field.

PossePlus Retreats

Each year they were enrolled in college, Posse alumni both led and participated in PossePlus Retreats (PPRs), three-day convenings of more than 100 members of the campus community. PPRs offer a unique opportunity to explore an important topic related to sociopolitical issues. Since 2008, Posse has facilitated 836 retreats with more than 69,000 participants.

CHART 9 LEADERSHIP ON CAMPUS

President of student body, student government, or class **6.2%**

Founder of any college club(s)/organization(s) **27.2%**

President of college club(s)/organization(s) **46.5%**

Officer of any college club(s)/organization(s) **80.4%**

Held any leadership role **84.6%**

Nearly 85% held a formal leadership role on campus



New Posse Scholar at Awards Ceremony

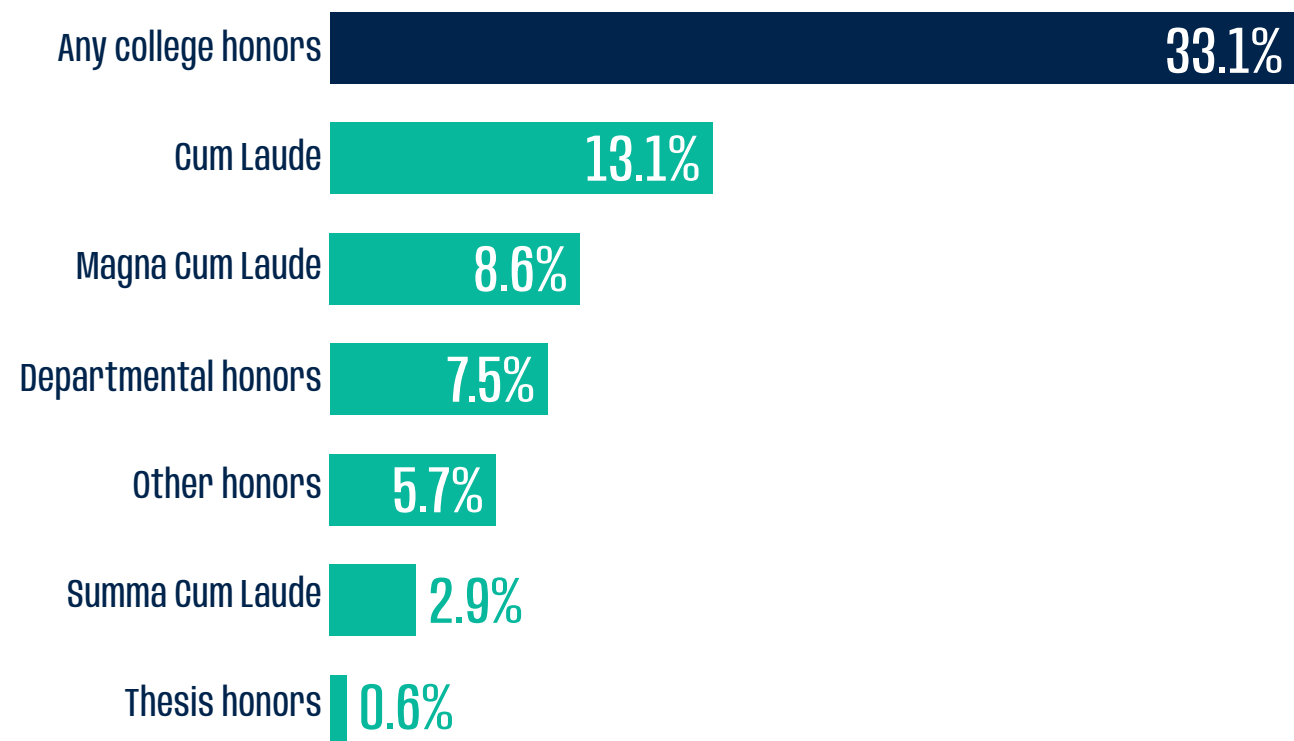
HONORS + AWARDS†

Posse alumni excelled academically at their alma maters. The average final college GPA of Posse alumni was 3.24, and 33 percent graduated with honors, including Latin, departmental, and thesis honors (CHART 10). Approximately 47 percent of Posse alumni were on their school's Dean's List at some point during college.

Additionally, many exceeded their schools' baseline degree expectations, with nearly a quarter completing more than one college major and 40.2 percent completing at least one minor.† Alumni pursued a wide range of major fields of study (CHART 11). More than 40 percent of Posse alumni took advantage of international opportunities for scholarship, available only to students in good academic standing. These alumni studied abroad in more than 100 different countries (CHART 12). Due to their academic success, many Posse alumni also belong to competitive honor societies and have received numerous scholarships and fellowships for undergraduate and graduate study opportunities (see spotlight on page 24).

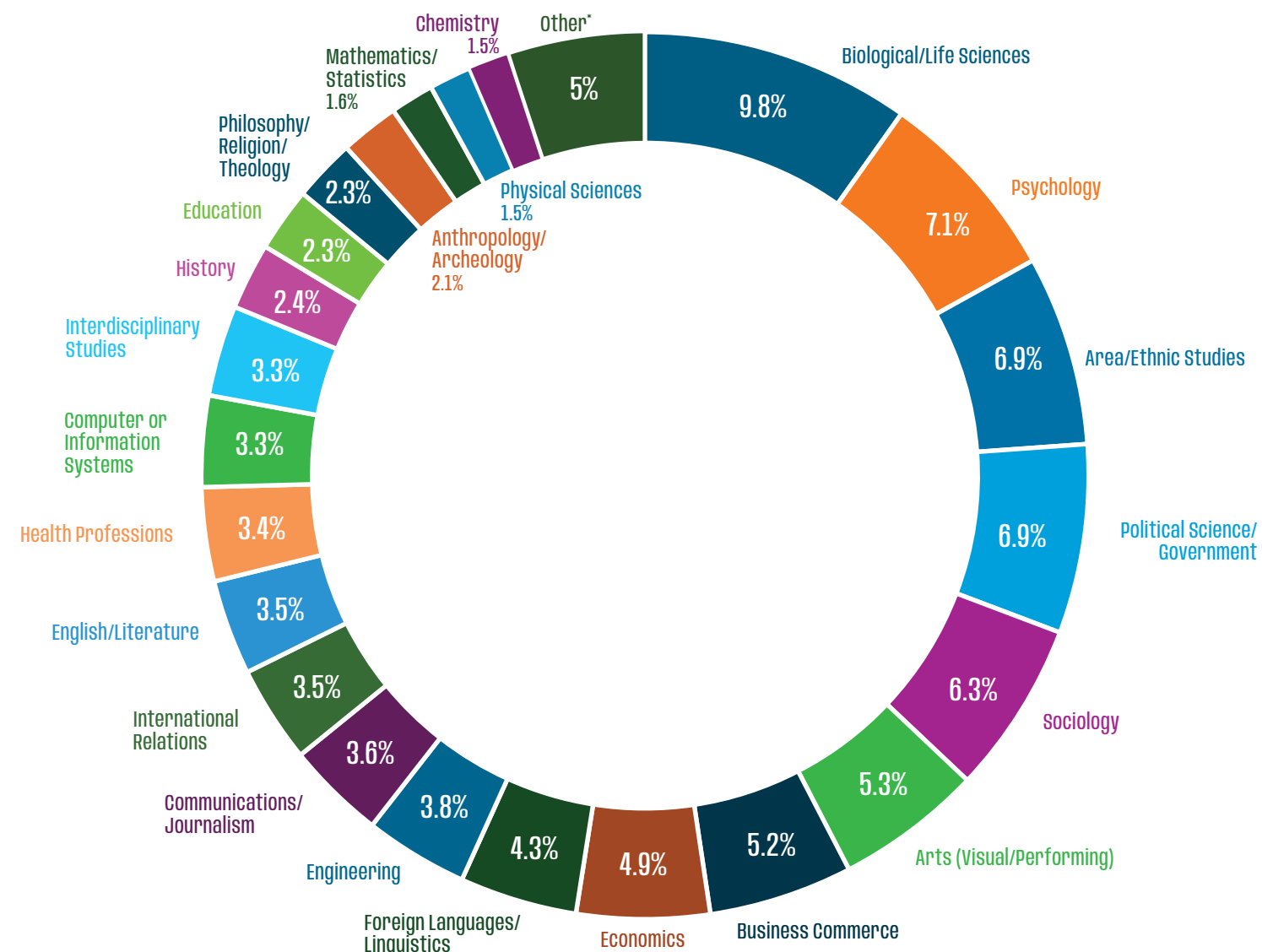
33% of alumni graduated with honors

CHART 10 GRADUATION HONORS



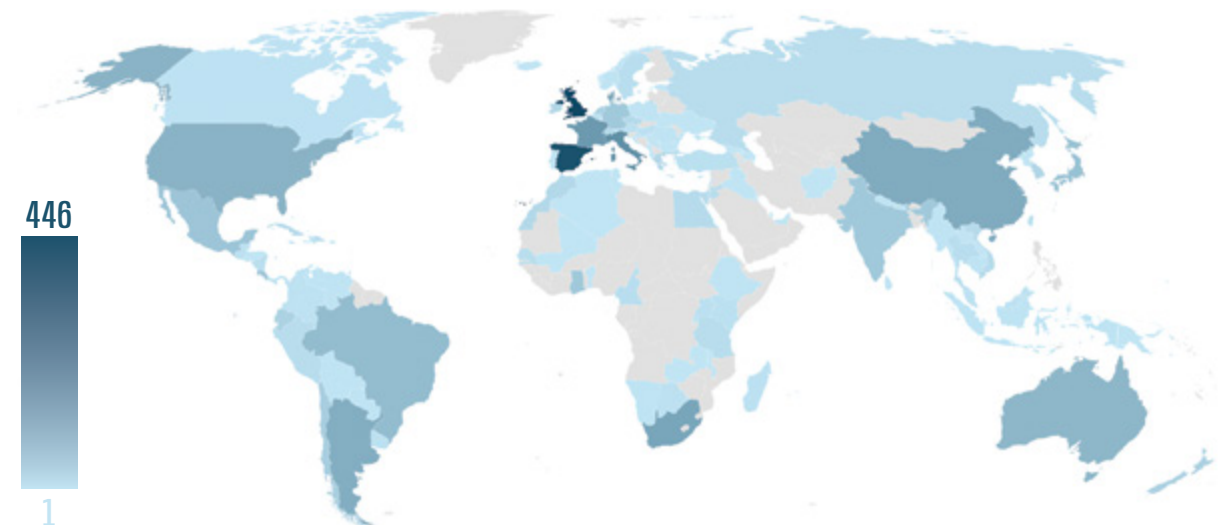
† Data in this section are for all Posse alumni with the relevant data points on file, not just 2024 Census respondents.

CHART 11 UNDERGRADUATE MAJOR FIELDS OF STUDY



* Human Development/Family Studies 1.0%; Other 0.7%; Architecture/Environmental Design 0.6%; Law 0.6%; Agriculture and Natural Resources 0.6%; Public Affairs 0.3%; Social Work 0.3%; Accounting 0.3%; Advertising 0.2%; Human Resources 0.1%; Nonprofit Management 0.1%; Criminal Justice 0.1%; Library Science <0.1%

CHART 12 STUDY ABROAD COUNTRIES



Daniel Acheampong
Co-Founder and Partner, Visible Hands
Brandeis University Posse Alum
Posse National Board Member



CHART 13 HOW WAS POSSE IMPORTANT TO YOU IN COLLEGE?

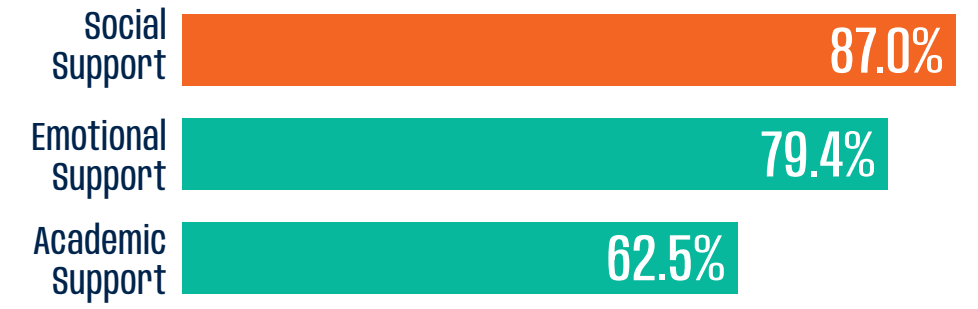
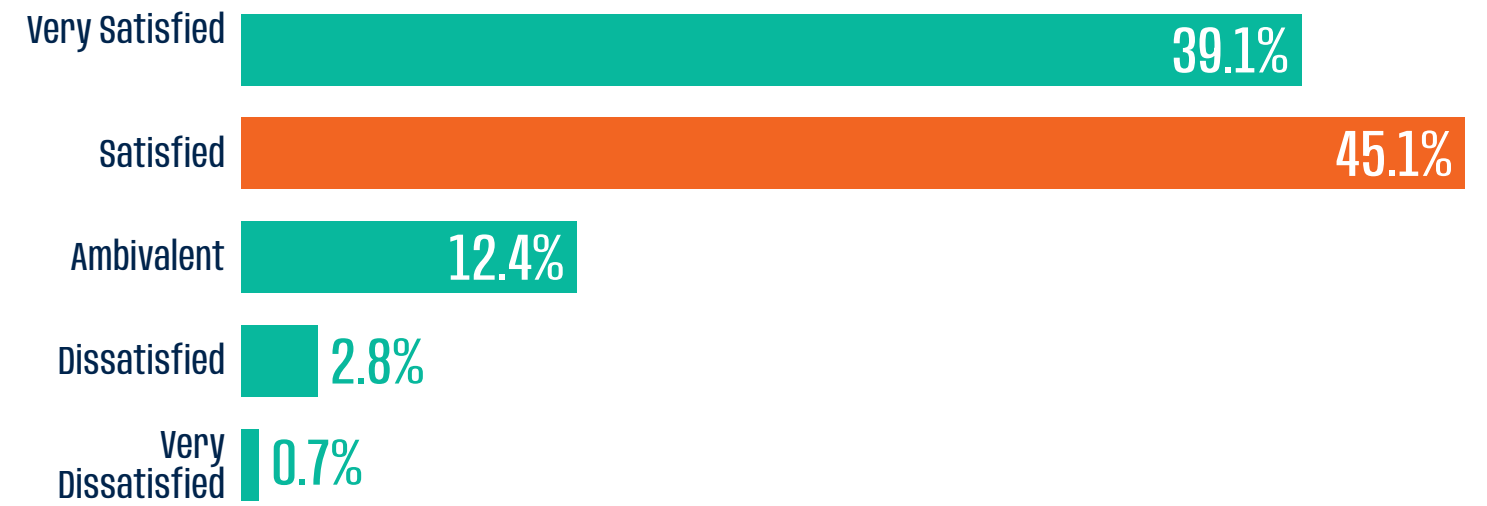


CHART 14 OVERALL, HOW SATISFIED WERE YOU WITH YOUR COLLEGE EXPERIENCE?



Members of the first Arts Program Posse cohort at Bard college with their mentor.





Lewis & Clark College Graduates

PERSISTENCE + RETENTION

Posse alumni as a whole excelled on campus and the overwhelming majority went on to graduate. Despite their success, however, many alumni also experienced significant obstacles. For these graduates, the combination of rigorous academics, new social expectations, and emergent adulthood resulted in considerable stress and anxiety during their time on campus. Nearly a third of Posse alumni at some point considered dropping out. Community support was a key factor in their persistence. Most alumni rated their families, their fellow Posse members, and their Posse mentors as important or very important to keeping them enrolled. Even if they did not actively consider dropping out, alumni credited Posse for helping them persevere through the normal ups and downs of college. A majority of alumni reported that Posse staff and programming were sources of social, emotional and academic support (CHART 13).

The challenges notwithstanding, alumni were overwhelmingly happy with their college experience, with 84.2 percent saying they were satisfied or very satisfied (CHART 14) and 90.5 percent rating the quality of their undergraduate education highly. Alumni also reported that they value the on-campus college experience. When asked if they could get the same degree online or in person, 96.8 percent said they would prefer to be educated in person. Given the rise of online degree programs and the convenience of new technologies, it is notable that these future leaders strongly prefer an on-campus, in-person experience. Finally, Posse alumni† boast a graduation rate of approximately 90 percent— more than 20 percentage points higher than the average graduation rate for private nonprofit institutions.²¹

Posse Scholars graduate at a rate of 90%



Monique L. Nelson
Chair • CEO, UniWorld Group Inc.
Vanderbilt University Posse Alum
Posse New York Advisory Board Member

SPOTLIGHT GRADUATE SCHOOL + FELLOWSHIPS

Post-baccalaureate degrees continue to grow in popularity and are important for career advancement. Between 2011-12 and 2021-22, the total number of master's degrees conferred in the U.S. increased by 16 percent, and the number of doctoral degrees increased by 20 percent. Additionally, among full-time workers over the age of 25, earnings for master's and doctoral degree holders are higher than for workers whose highest degree is a bachelor's.²²

54.6% of alumni who graduated at least five years ago have an advanced degree

Posse's Graduate + Fellowship Program works to match Posse Scholars' considerable potential with national fellowships and graduate school programs, which offer scholars and alumni access to influential networks and propel them forward in their careers. As part of these efforts, Posse's Graduate School Affiliates offer Posse Scholars and alumni a limited number of full-tuition scholarships each year. More than 68 percent of alumni are currently attending, planning to attend, or have already completed graduate or professional school.

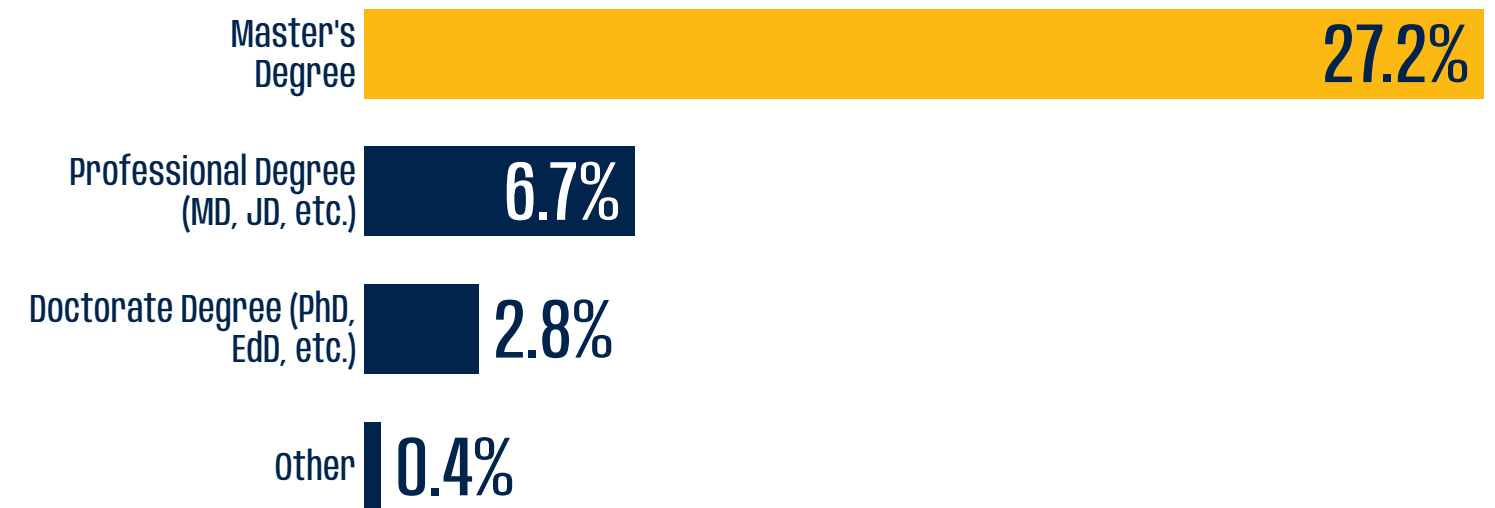
GRADUATE SCHOOL AFFILIATES

- Duke Fuqua School of Business
- The George Washington University School of Business
- Johns Hopkins University Krieger School of Arts & Sciences
- Northeastern University
- D'Amore-McKim School of Business
- Northwestern University Pritzker School of Law
- Teachers College, Columbia University
- University of Virginia School of Law
- Yale School of the Environment

SINCE 2001, POSSE SCHOLARS AND ALUMNI HAVE BEEN AWARDED OVER 900 NATIONAL FELLOWSHIPS, INCLUDING:

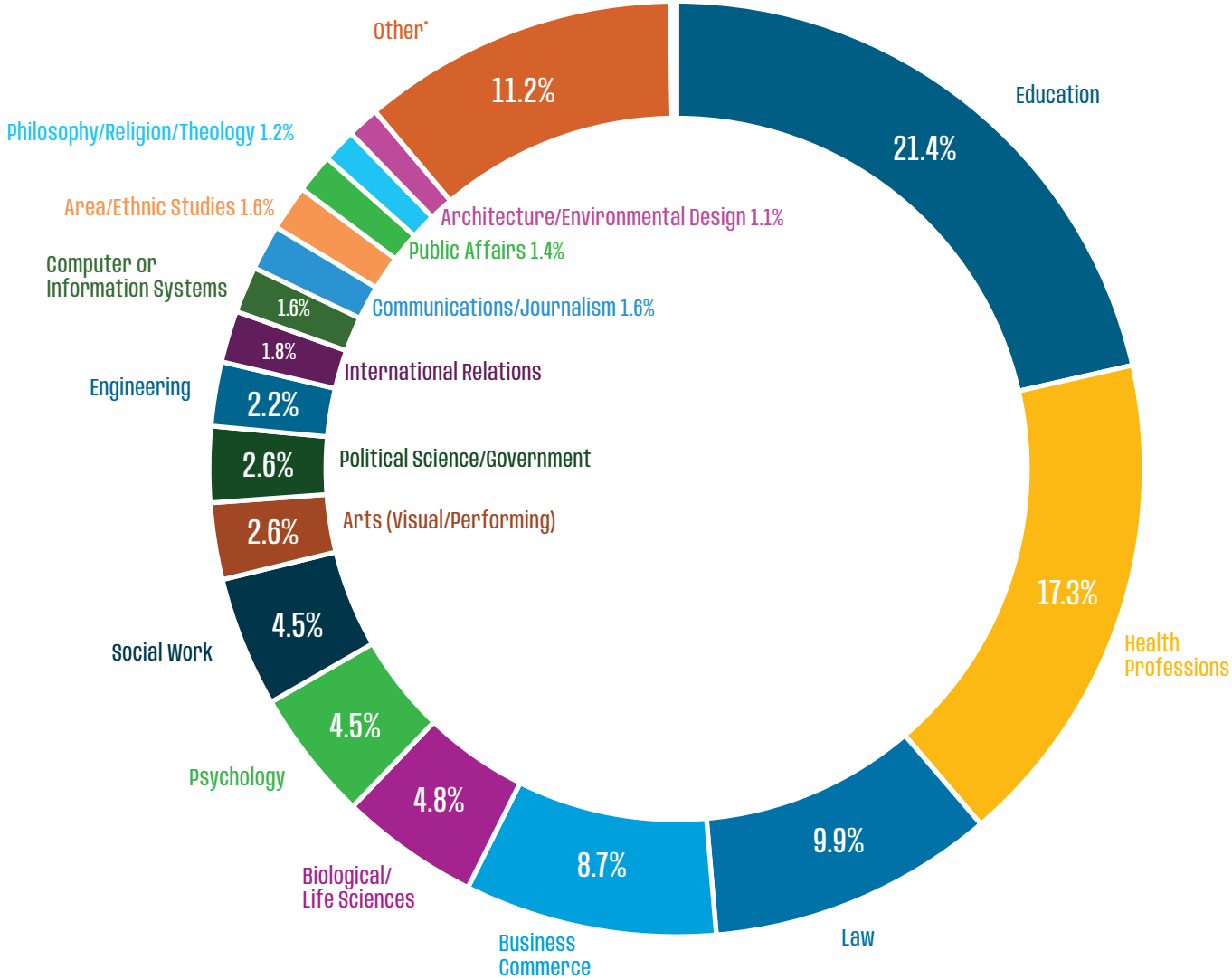
- Amgen Scholars Program
- Beinecke Scholarship Program
- Boren Scholarship
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Fellowships
- Clinton Global Initiative
- Critical Language Scholarship
- Davis Projects for Peace Grants
- Ford Foundation Fellowships
- Freeman Asia
- Fulbright US Student Program
- Fulbright UK Summer Institute
- Fulbright US Scholar Program
- Fund For Education Abroad (FEA)
- Gates Cambridge Scholarship
- Gilman International Scholarship Program
- Goldwater Scholarship
- Howard Hughes Medical Institute Fellowship
- Humanity in Action Fellowship Programs
- Institute for Citizens & Scholars Fellowships
- Knight-Hennessy Scholars
- Luce Scholars Program
- Marshall Scholarship
- Marshall-Motley Scholars
- McNair Scholarship
- Mellon Mays Undergraduate Fellowship
- National Health Service Corps Scholarship
- National Institutes of Health Undergraduate Scholarship Program
- National Science Foundation Graduate Research Fellowship
- NYU Shanghai Global Writing and Speaking Fellowship
- Patti Grace Smith Fellowship
- Paul & Daisy Soros Fellowship for New Americans
- Payne Fellowship
- Peace and Justice Transformative Leaders Fellowship
- Peace Corps
- PPIA Junior Summer Institute
- Presidential Leadership Scholarship
- Rangel Fellowships
- Reach The World Travelers
- Samvid Scholars Program
- Schwarzman Scholars Program
- The Coro Fellowship
- Thomas J. Watson Fellowship
- Thomas R. Pickering Foreign Affairs Fellowship
- Tillman Scholar Program
- Truman Scholarship
- Udall Scholarship

CHART 15 HIGHEST GRADUATE DEGREE OBTAINED



SPOTLIGHT GRADUATE SCHOOL + FELLOWSHIPS

CHART 16 GRADUATE DEGREES BY FIELD OF STUDY



*Sociology 1.0%; Physical Sciences 1.0%; English/Literature 0.9%; Interdisciplinary Studies 0.8%; History 0.8%; Agriculture and Natural Resources 0.7%; Chemistry 0.7%; Nonprofit Management 0.7%; Mathematics/Statistics 0.7%; Other 0.6%; Human Resources 0.6%; Library Science 0.5%; Accounting 0.5%; Human Development/Family Studies 0.4%; Foreign Languages/Linguistics 0.3%; Economics 0.3%; Anthropology/Archeology 0.3%; Criminal Justice 0.2%; Advertising <0.1%; Culinary Arts <0.1%

Derron Wallace
Associate Professor of Education Policy and
African Diaspora Studies, Brown University
Wheaton College Posse Alum
Ph.D., Cambridge University
Marshall scholar
Gates Cambridge Scholar





Connecticut College Alum Joaquin Morales

ALUMNI IN THE WORKFORCE

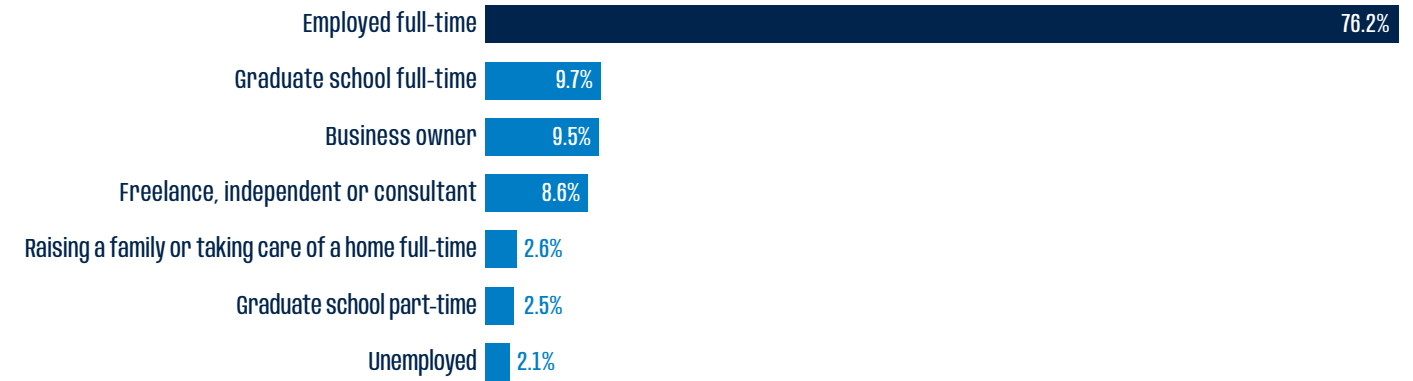
Posse's ultimate goal is to build a powerful network of leaders who represent our country's rich diversity. Through its Career Program, the Foundation supports Scholars as they transition from leading on campus to leading in the workforce. The program provides workshops on résumé writing and interviewing, an online jobs portal, one-on-one career coaching, and internship opportunities at more than 250 industry-leading companies and organizations. Due in part to these supports, Posse alumni are ascending to positions of leadership in a wide array of professional fields—from business to the arts, academia to government. Their growing presence in the workplace, at the tables where important decisions are made, is proof positive the program works.

EMPLOYMENT RATE + FIELDS

Ninety-five percent of Posse alumni are currently employed or attending graduate school; just 2.1 percent are unemployed ([CHART 17](#)). More than half of alumni said that Posse helped them find a job or internship, a figure that is likely to increase as the Posse alumni network grows and the organization continues to invest in meaningful career development opportunities. Posse alumni hold a broad range of positions across multiple fields, with many taking on roles in education, nonprofit, and STEM ([read about Posse STEM on page 36](#)). The following page contains job industries for alumni who provided information on their current employment. ([CHART 18](#)).†

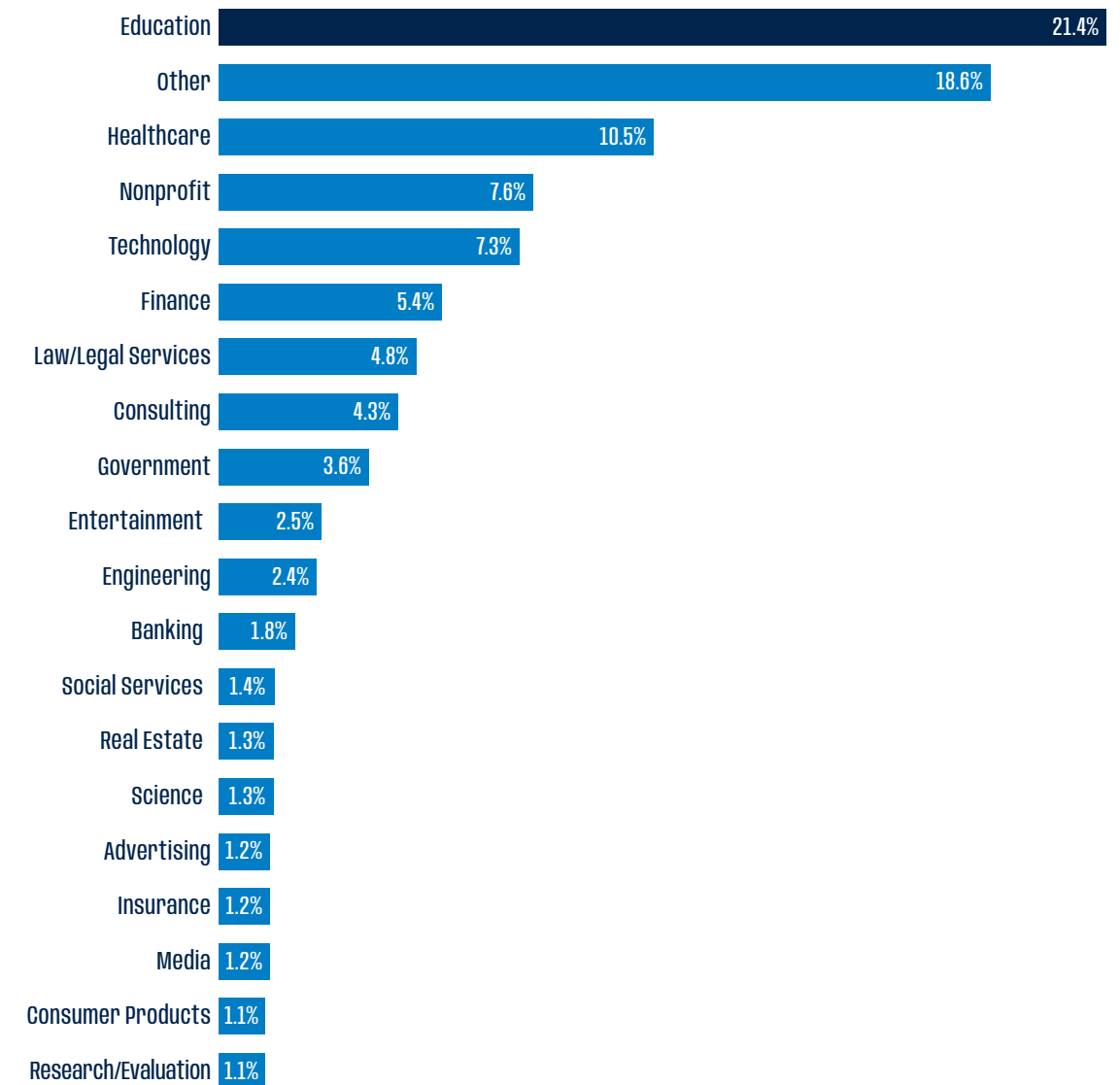
Posse alumni
hold a broad
range of
positions across
multiple fields

CHART 17 CURRENT PROFESSIONAL STATUS*



*Respondents could select multiple responses; denominator is number of alumni who answered this question.

CHART 18 ALUMNI JOB INDUSTRIES*



†Industries representing less than 1% of jobs combined into 'other'

PROFESSIONAL ADVANCEMENT + ECONOMIC MOBILITY

Posse alumni are steadily advancing in the workplace, reaching more senior positions and enjoying higher earnings as their careers progress (CHARTS 20 and 21).¹ Nearly 10 percent of Posse alumni are in a CEO/president, C-suite, or executive-level role six or more years after graduating from college. Posse alumni also occupy managerial positions at high rates, especially as their careers advance (CHART 21).

In the United States, workers with a bachelor's degree are much less likely to be unemployed and to have higher earnings (approximately 60 percent more, depending on the source) than workers whose education did not progress past high school.²³

In addition, recent research from the National Center for Education Statistics suggests that earning a bachelor's degree effectively erases the discrepancy between first-generation graduates and their peers in terms of employment status and earnings post-graduation.²⁴

Indeed, among Posse alumni who graduated from college more than 10 years ago, 80.8 percent are in a higher economic class now than when they were growing up (CHART 22). Of alumni who experienced upward social mobility, 78.8 percent attribute the change to their undergraduate education.

Nearly 10% of alumni who graduated at least six years ago are in a CEO/President, C-Suite, or executive-level role

CHART 19 CURRENT JOB LEVEL

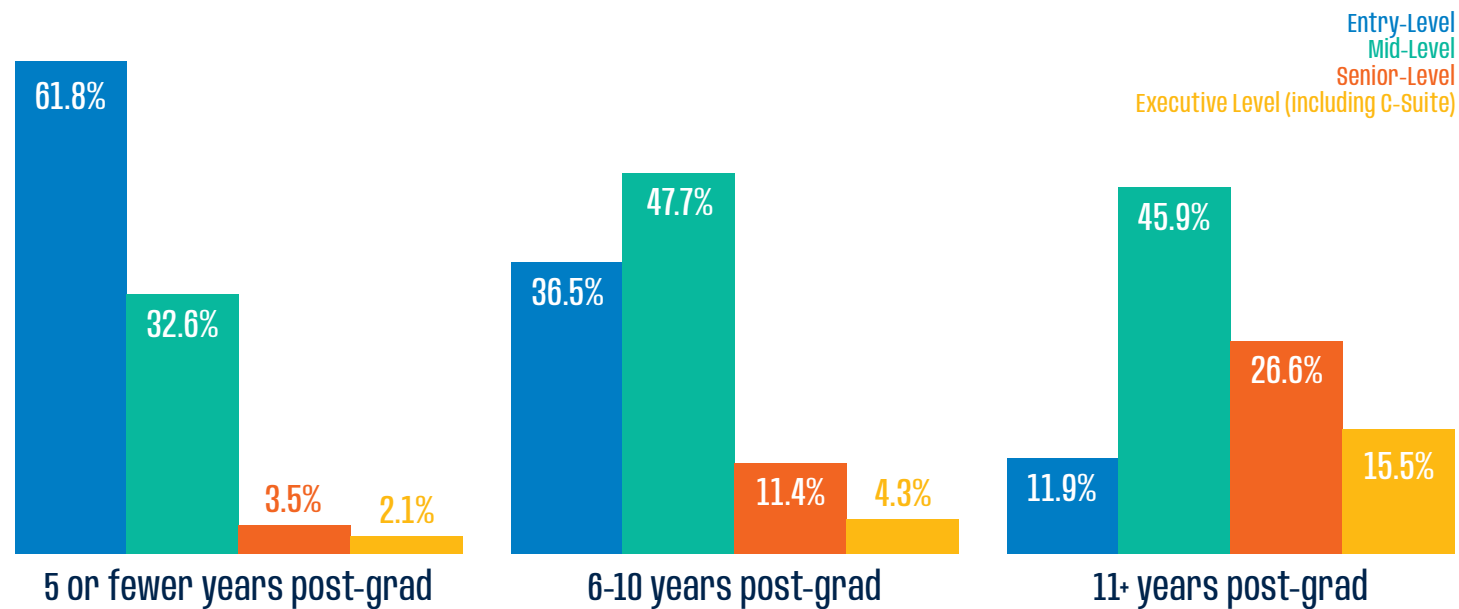
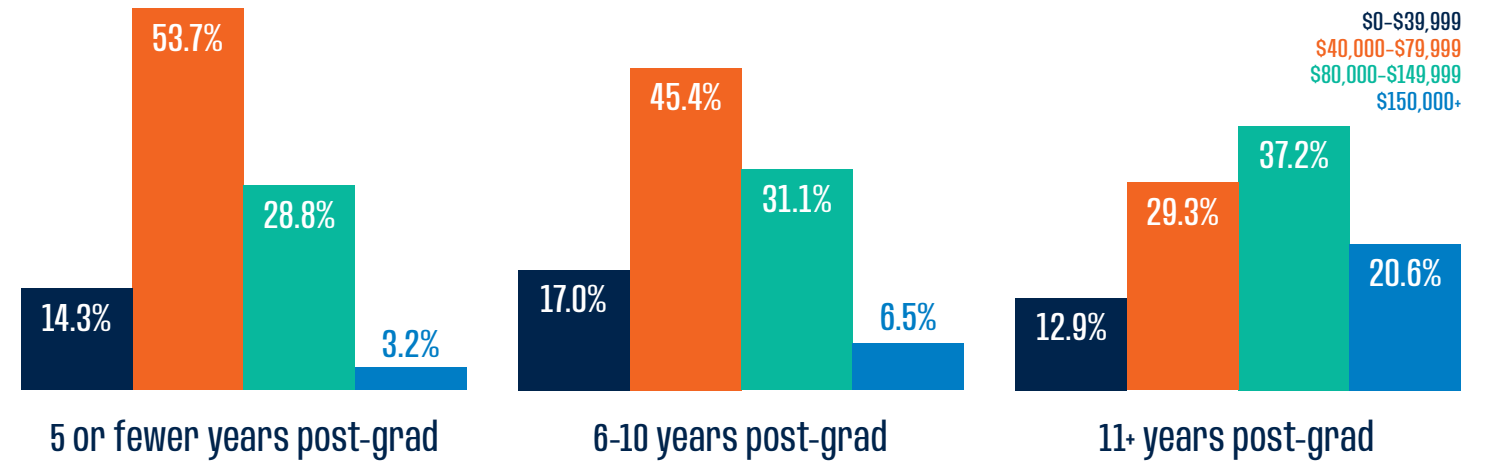


CHART 20 CURRENT SALARY



80.8% of alumni who graduated more than 10 years ago are in a higher economic class today

CHART 21 POSSE ALUMNI IN A MANAGEMENT POSITION

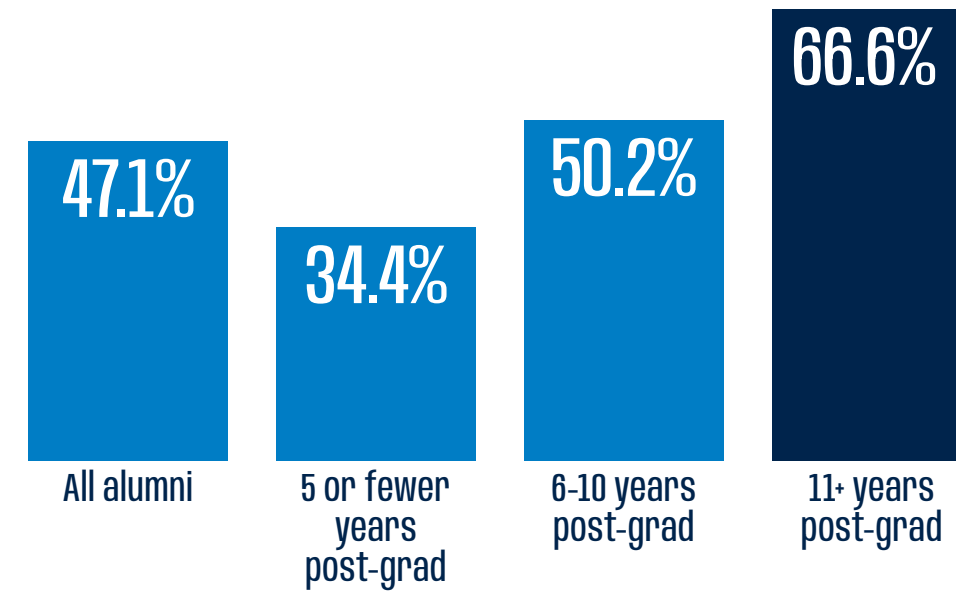
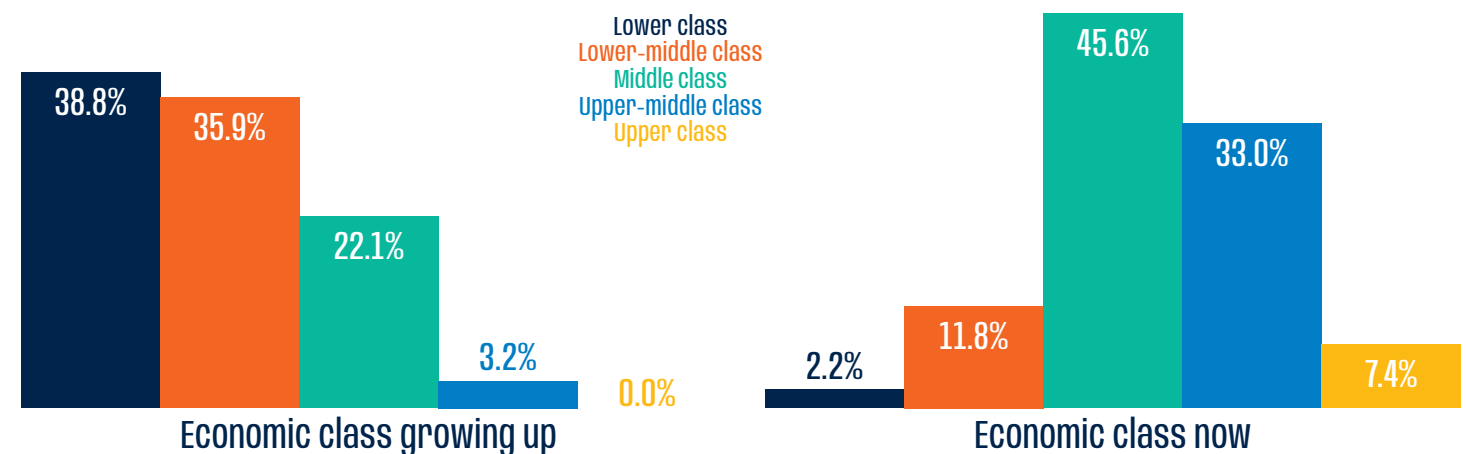


CHART 22 POSSE ALUMNI UPWARD SOCIAL MOBILITY (11+ YEARS POST-GRAD)



INCLUSIVE LEADERSHIP

More than 30 percent of alumni answered the qualitative question, “How has Posse influenced the way you lead in your workplace or community?” Alumni frequently mentioned Posse’s role in helping them to lead collaboratively and inclusively in team settings. Other common responses included increasing their appreciation for diversity, honing their leadership style, and improving their communication skills. Several respondents also mentioned personal development, increased confidence, and a deeper appreciation for building community.

“Posse’s leadership training taught me to challenge the norm and feel confident. I know that my lived experience has given me perspectives that others may never have considered.”

GEORGINA ESPINOZA
MBA Candidate at Duke University
Fuqua School of Business,
Agnes Scott College

“I am always thinking of ways to improve things and asking questions to ignite change. I also try to be mindful of incorporating everyone’s ideas and experiences into how I do my work, as a way to bring people together.”

AMANDA BRITO
Supervising Investigator at
The Legal Aid Society,
Vanderbilt University

“Becoming a Posse Scholar increased my confidence in my leadership ability but also humbled me. I take a solution, team-oriented approach, fostering more collaboration amongst team members and trusting them to do their part.”

KYE HARRIS
Co-Founder and COO
Politics on the Go
Lawrence University

“During our weekly meetings on campus, I had the opportunity to engage in difficult conversations, challenging my preconceived notions of the world. My Posse provided a nurturing environment where I learned group facilitation, task delegation, and active listening skills.”

JOSÉ RANGEL-GARIBAY
Health Program Analyst II
Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors,
Tulane University

CAREER SATISFACTION

Posse alumni view their careers more positively than the average U.S. worker. Nearly three-quarters said they were satisfied or very satisfied with their careers (CHART 23), whereas just 50 percent of U.S. workers reported job satisfaction in a recent poll.²⁵ Overall, only 7.9 percent of Posse alumni consider their current role as “just a job to get by”; the majority view it as a career or a stepping stone to a career, an outlook that appears to increase with age and job experience (CHART 24). In comparison, about a third of U.S. workers say their current role is just a job to get them by.²⁶ Finally, only 3.6 percent of alumni with full-time jobs are simultaneously looking for employment, suggesting perhaps that most alumni are content in their current roles.

73.6% of Posse alumni are satisfied or very satisfied with their career

CHART 23
HOW SATISFIED ARE YOU WITH THE COURSE OF YOUR CAREER THUS FAR?
(% SATISFIED OR VERY SATISFIED)

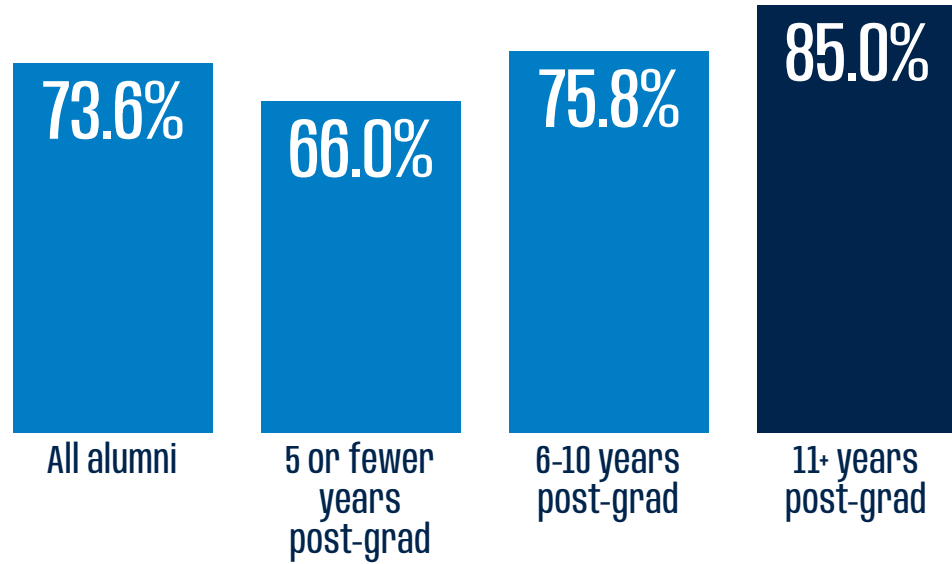
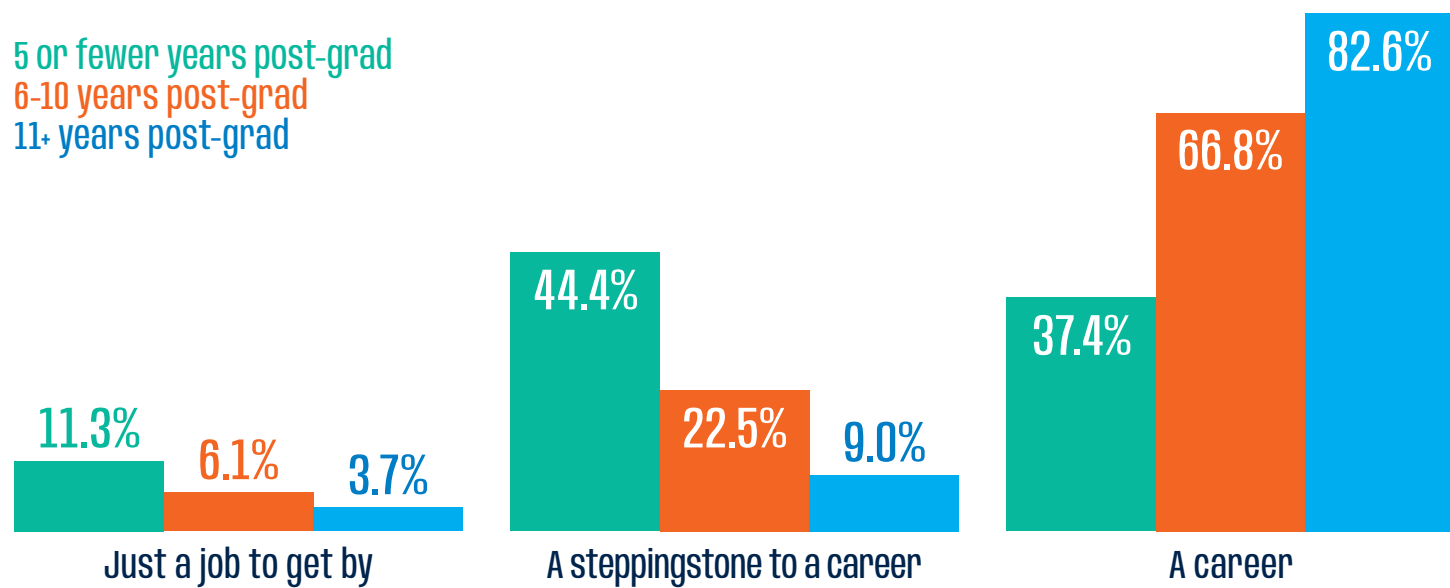


CHART 24 YOUR CURRENT JOB IS...

5 or fewer years post-grad
6-10 years post-grad
11+ years post-grad



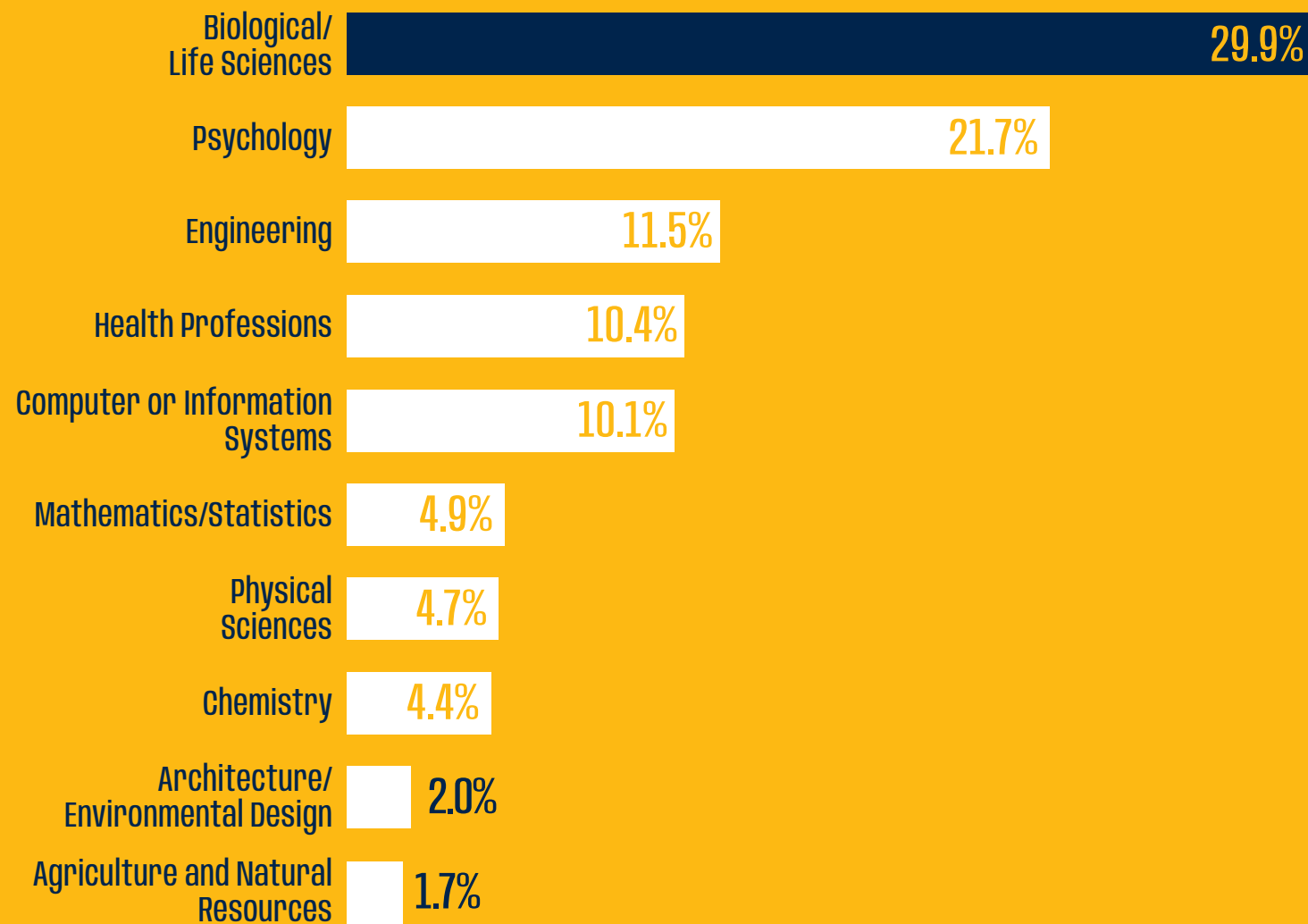
Johnathan Nieves
Emergency Medicine Physician
Dickinson College Posse Alum
M.D., Stony Brook University School of Medicine



SPOTLIGHT STEM

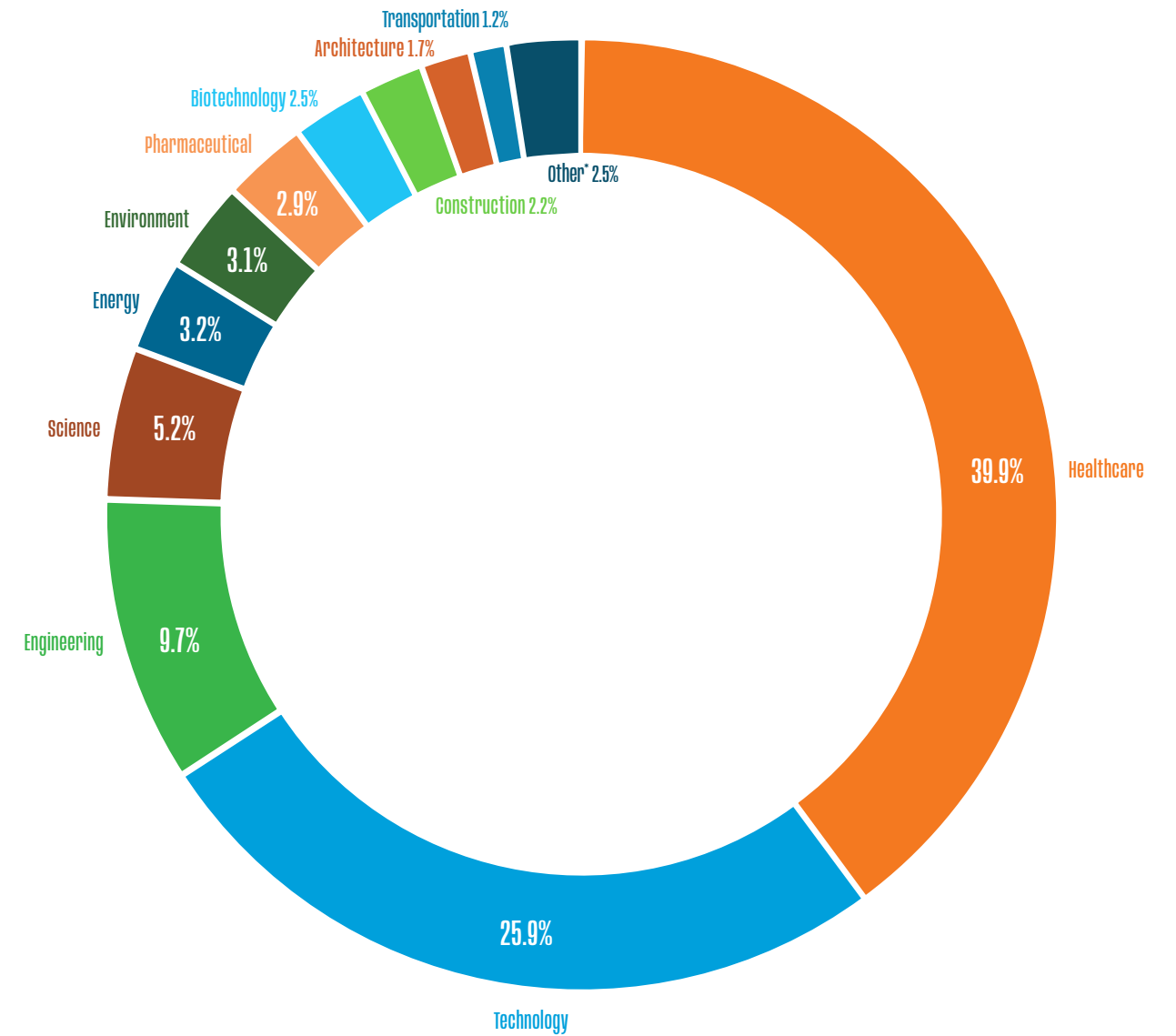
While Posse alumni choose majors across a diversity of areas (**CHART 11**), 40 percent majored in a STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics) field. Growth in STEM occupations is projected to continue through at least the next 10 years.²⁷ Posse's partner colleges and universities—many of which are among the top national research institutions—provide exceptional training, support, and job preparation in these high-demand fields.

CHART 25 ALUMNI STEM MAJOR FIELDS OF STUDY*



*2,814 alumni have 3,859 STEM major fields of study.

CHART 26 ALUMNI WORKING IN STEM INDUSTRIES



*Manufacturing 1.0%; Farming & Agriculture 0.6%; Chemicals 0.2%; Electronics 0.2%; Machinery: 0.2%; Utilities: 0.2%



Yeslee Neris
Mount Holyoke Posse Scholar

POSSE'S IMPACT

In addition to selecting promising young leaders and supporting them to graduation, Posse's high-touch model works to ensure that scholars and alumni leave their undergraduate institutions with a wide professional network—ready to pursue their careers with a sense of confidence and purpose.



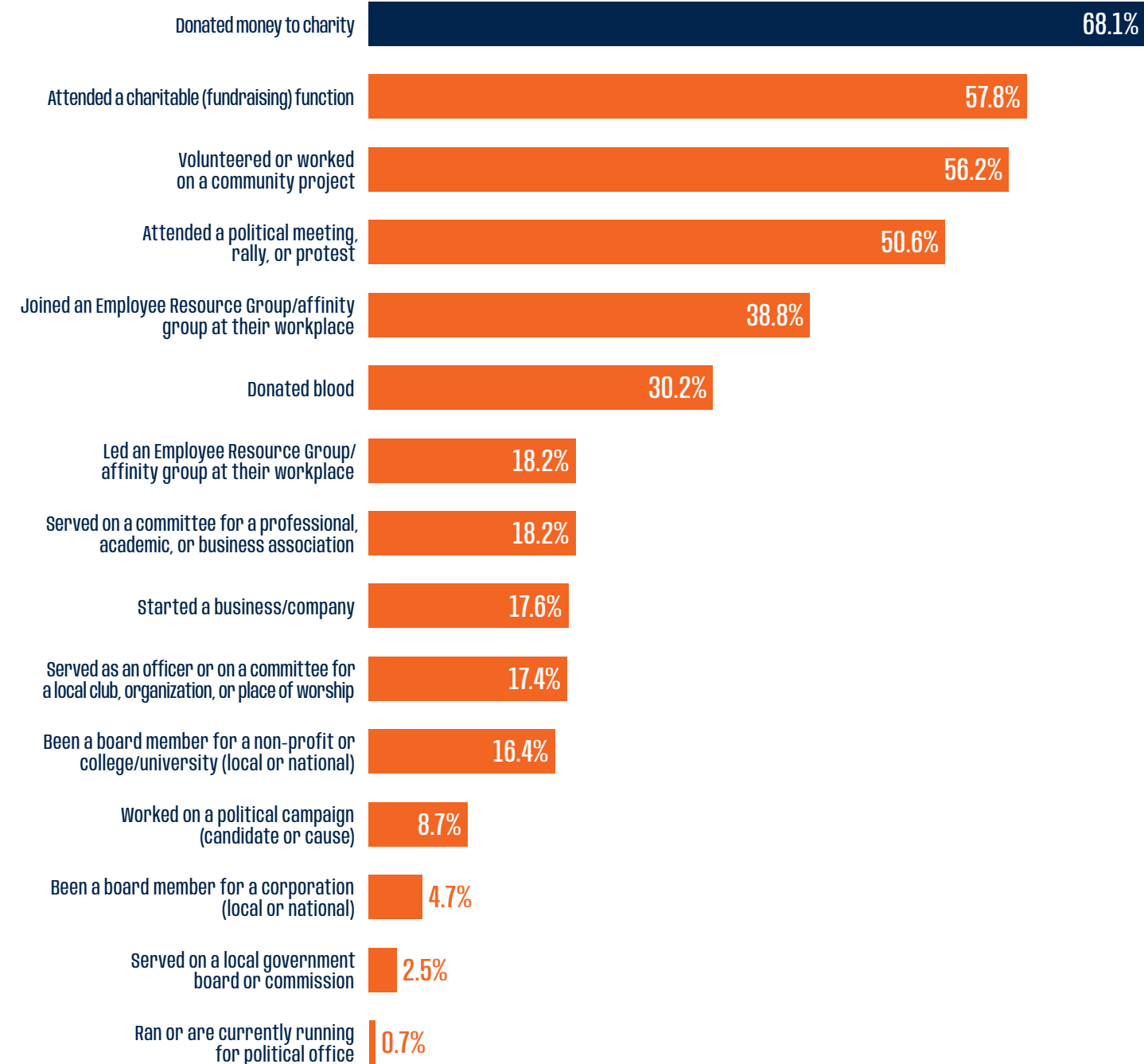
Posse Workshop

COMMUNITY

Posse Scholars receive leadership training prior to matriculating and are encouraged to make their voices count while on campus. This helps to explain why 85 percent held a formal leadership position in college. Unsurprisingly, Posse alumni have continued their legacy of engagement and activism in their communities. More than half have donated money to charity, attended a charitable function, volunteered on a community project, or attended a political meeting, rally or protest (**CHART 27**).

38.4% served on a board, committee, or commission

CHART 27 POSSE CIVIC ENGAGEMENT



Posse alumni also demonstrate a strong commitment to the companies and organizations they support. Approximately 38 percent of Posse alumni have served on a board, committee, or commission. Posse alumni are also represented on Posse's national board, advisory boards, and on the boards of their college and university alma maters. Their investments in these institutions reflect a dedication to giving back and contributing to the greater good.

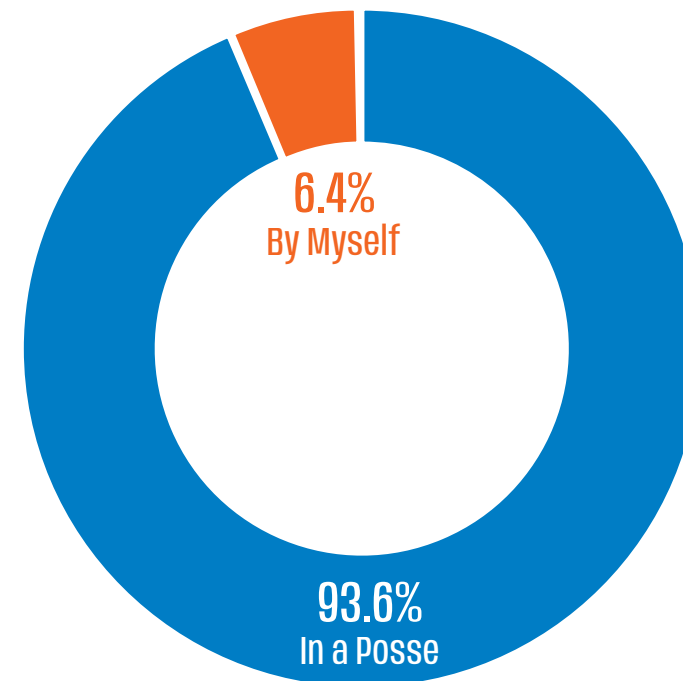
Community engagement is a vital aspect of life after college. Engaging with diverse groups and real-world challenges fosters empathy and improves decision-making. By staying involved in their communities—as volunteers, mentors, advocates, or local leaders—Posse alumni strengthen civic life while continuing their own personal and professional growth.

Sarah Martinez Roth
Senior Research Scientist,
Vertex Pharmaceuticals
Colby College Posse Alum
Ph.D., Georgetown University



Posse Alumni at the Alumni Conference

CHART 28 IF YOU COULD DO IT OVER,
WOULD YOU ATTEND COLLEGE IN A POSSE OR
BY YOURSELF?

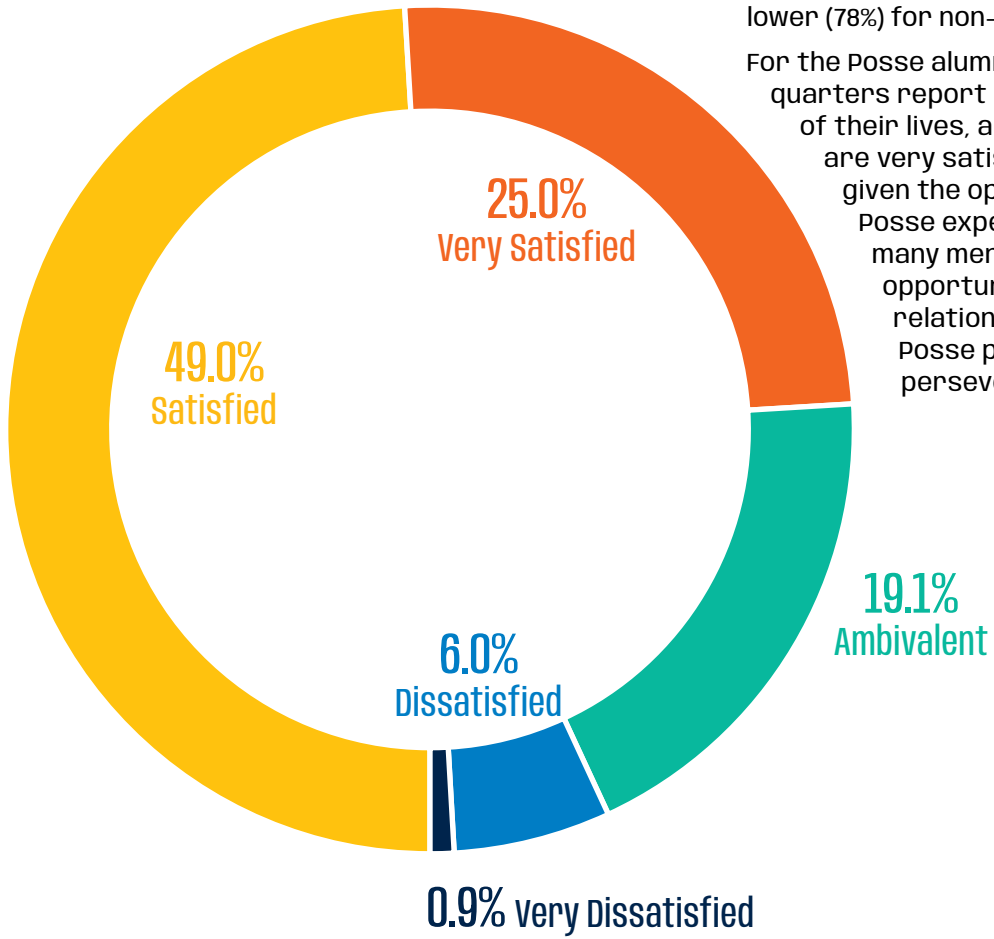


LASTING CONNECTIONS

Posse cohorts consist of students of differing genders, ethnicities, nationalities and socioeconomic backgrounds. During pre-collegiate training and their four years together on campus, Posse Scholars collaborate on projects, offer emotional support, and learn from each other. Many form lasting friendships. Approximately 94 percent of alumni reported they would choose to attend college again in a Posse rather than alone (**CHART 28**), and 87.1 percent are still in contact with someone from their Posse.

87.1% of alumni are still in contact with their Posse cohorts

CHART 29
**CONSIDERING ALL AREAS OF YOUR LIFE,
 HOW SATISFIED ARE YOU WITH THE CURRENT
 QUALITY OF YOUR LIFE?**



LIFE SATISFACTION

While life satisfaction in the U.S. has been on the decline since 2020, when 90% of Americans said they were satisfied with the way things were going in their personal lives, it remains relatively high, with 81% reporting satisfaction in 2025. This figure is slightly lower (78%) for non-white respondents.²⁸

For the Posse alumni surveyed, nearly three quarters report being satisfied with the quality of their lives, and a full quarter indicate they are very satisfied (**CHART 29**). When alumni were given the option to reflect on how their Posse experience has affected their lives, many mentioned that Posse increased opportunities, helped them build lasting relationships (particularly with their Posse peers), and provided support to persevere through challenges.

Zaakir Tameez
 Author, *Charles Sumner: Conscience of a Nation*
 University of Virginia Posse Alum
 Graduate, Yale School of Law



Posse Houston Scholars



ALUMNI PROFILE

The Posse Foundation believes that the leaders of the 21st century should reflect the country's rich demographic mix. To that end, Posse works to expand the pool from which elite colleges recruit students by identifying promising young leaders from the largest public high school systems in the nation. While Posse Scholars resemble typical college students at highly selective schools in terms of sex and age, they differ greatly along several other dimensions, including race & ethnicity, socioeconomic status, family background, standardized test performance, and high school experience.

Brandy L. Morrison
 CEO • Founder, Concord Consulting
 Rice University Posse Alum
 Posse National Board Member



AGE + SEX

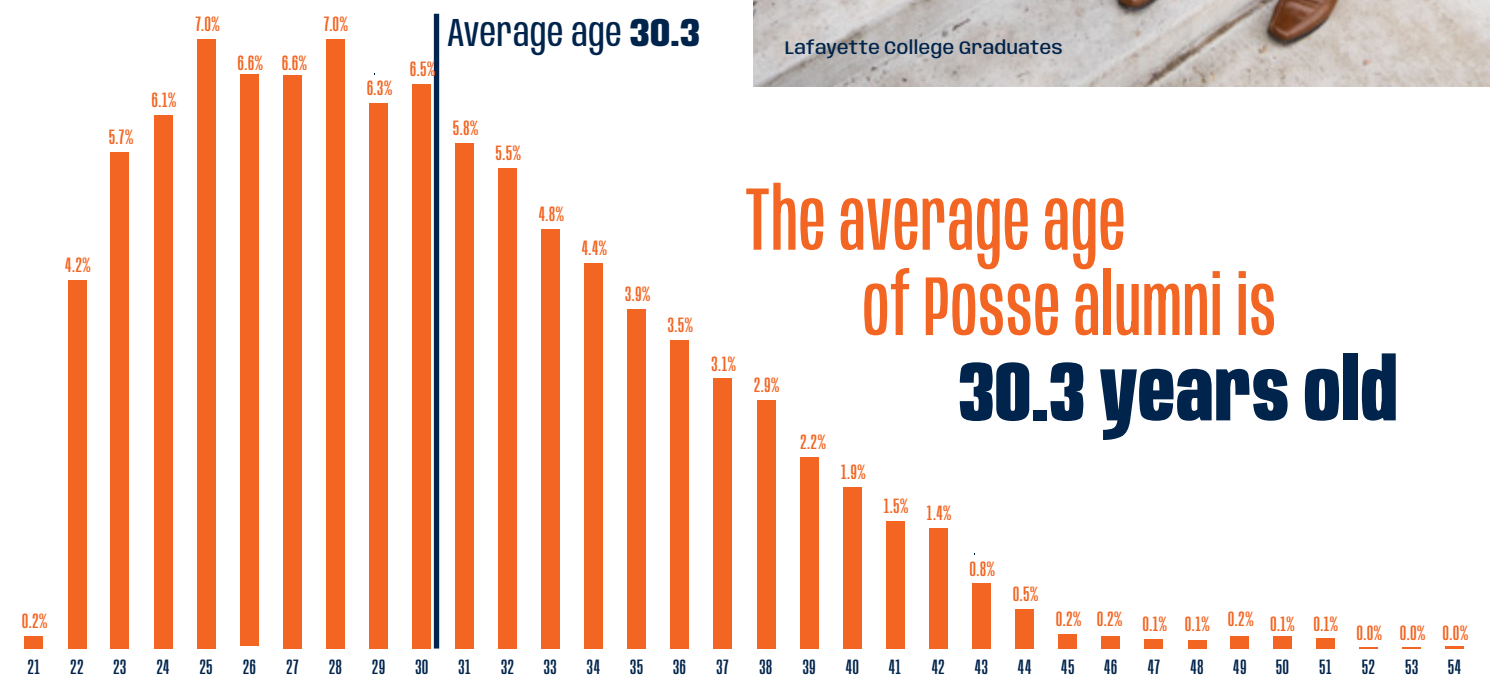
Like typical graduates of selective four-year institutions, most Posse alumni started college at the age of 18. Members of the first Posse cohort—which matriculated at Vanderbilt University in 1989—are in their mid-50s and represent the oldest class of alumni. The average Posse graduate, however, is just 30.3 years old and has been out of college 8.2 years (**CHART 1**).

While the number of participating colleges and students grew exponentially from 1999 to the present, resulting in thousands of alumni, the program grew more modestly in its first decade. As a consequence, Posse alumni are, on average, relatively young in their careers.

In 2012, Posse launched the Veterans Program at Vassar College to support post-9/11 U.S. veterans interested in pursuing bachelor's degrees at top colleges. Many of the veterans recruited for this program have held meaningful jobs and earned college credits before matriculating at their Posse partner college. As a result, they tend to be older; the average age of Posse Veterans alumni is 34.5.

Posse alumni skew female, which accords with current U.S. college student demographics.⁹ Posse partners have included five women's colleges—Agnes Scott, Bryn Mawr, Mount Holyoke, Smith and Wellesley. Consequently the annual Scholar recruitment pools for these institutions comprise solely female and women-identifying students.

CHART 1 POSSE ALUMNI BY AGE



The average age of Posse alumni is **30.3 years old**





California Institute of the Arts Posse Scholars

RACE + ETHNICITY

The majority of Posse alumni belong to an underrepresented racial minority group⁴ (CHART 2). In contrast, most alumni of Posse's partner colleges, and of highly selective schools more generally, are white (CHART 3). According to a 2018 report from Georgetown University, student enrollment at the 468 best-funded and most-selective four-year U.S. institutions is 77 percent white. In addition, Black and Latinx students attend open-access public colleges in disproportionate numbers to their white peers.⁵

The U.S. population has continued to diversify. Non-Hispanic whites made up 61.3 percent of the population in 2016 and 58.9 percent in 2022. By 2050, the U.S. Census Bureau projects that the United States will become

"minority white."⁶ This trend, however, is not reflected in leadership positions in the workplace.⁷

Eliminating this troubling disparity will require increasing the representation of minority groups at elite schools, as graduates of these institutions often are better positioned to secure top internships, graduate degrees, and, ultimately, leadership-track jobs.⁸

Despite some gains in recent years, Black, Latinx, and American Indian/Alaskan Native students remain underrepresented at selective institutions compared to their shares of the college-age population, while white and Asian students remain overrepresented.⁹

A majority of Posse alumni belong to underrepresented racial groups

Nana O. Sarpong
 Orthopaedic Surgeon, Columbia University Medical Center
 Brandeis University STEM Posse Alum
 Posse National Board Member



COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY
 MEDICAL CENTER

Nana O. Sarpong, MD, MBA
 Orthopaedic Surgery

CHART 2
POSSE ALUMNI BY RACE

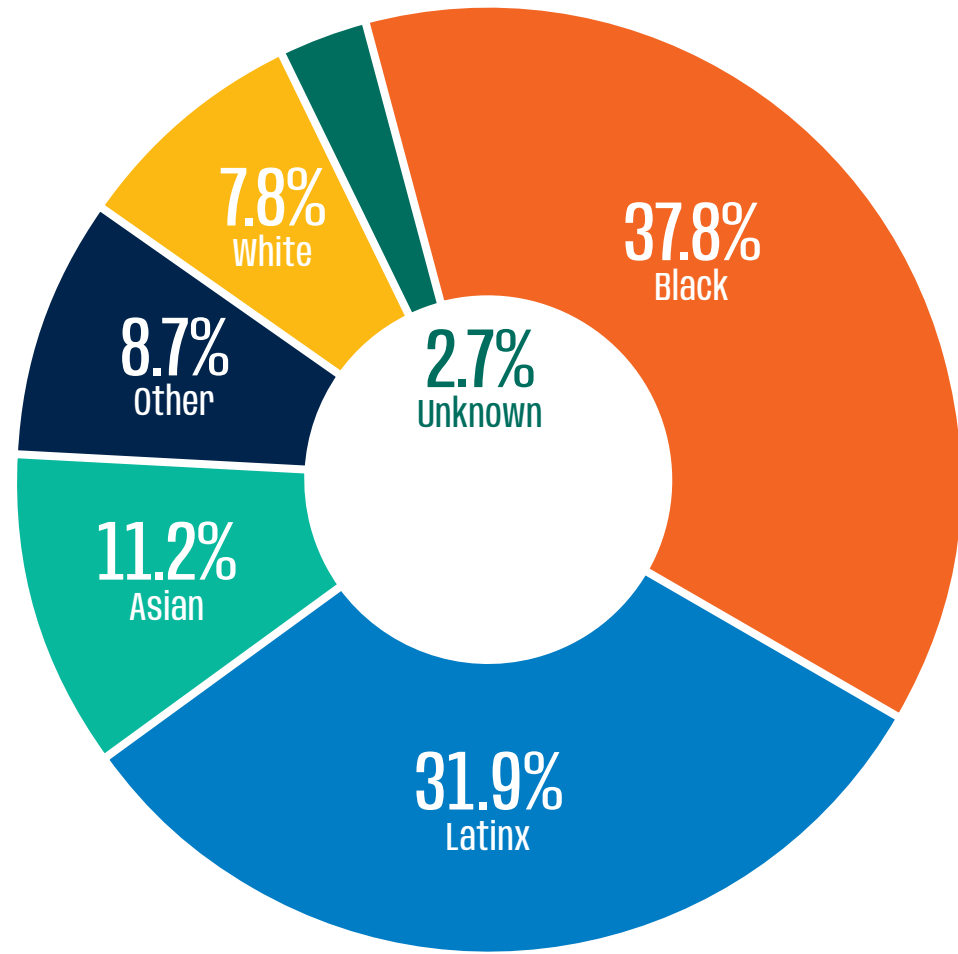
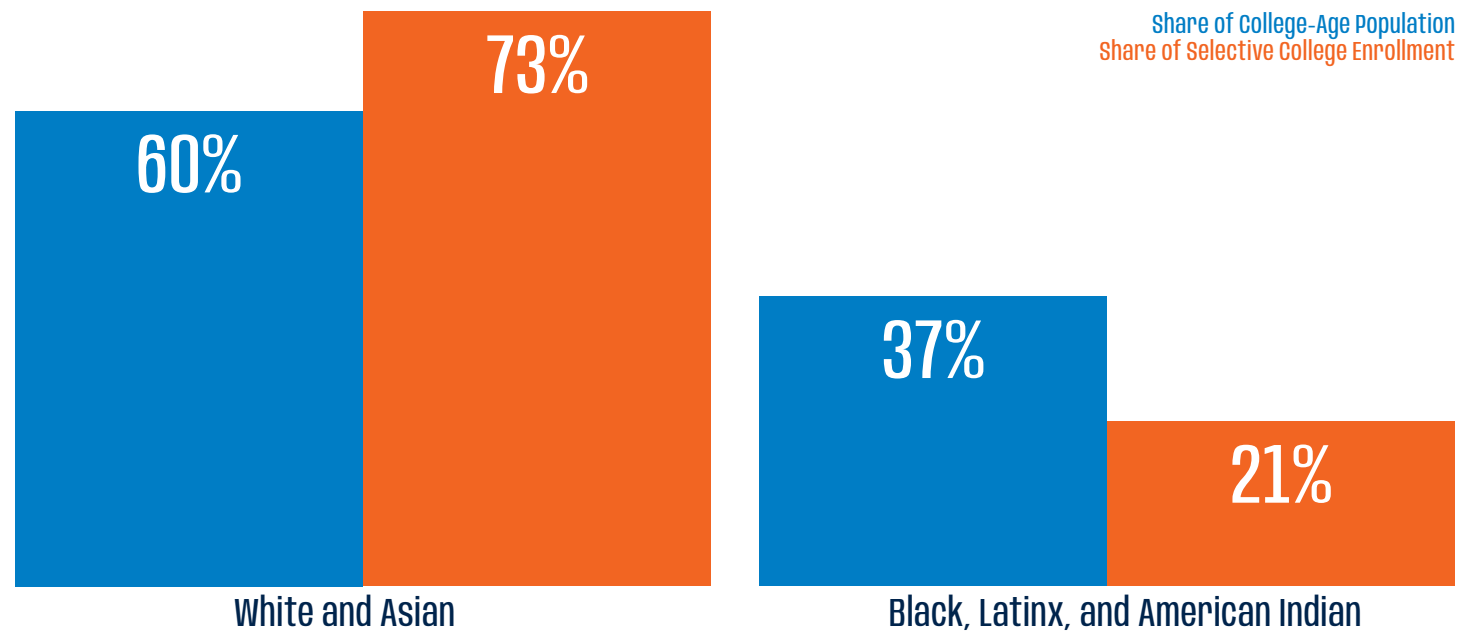
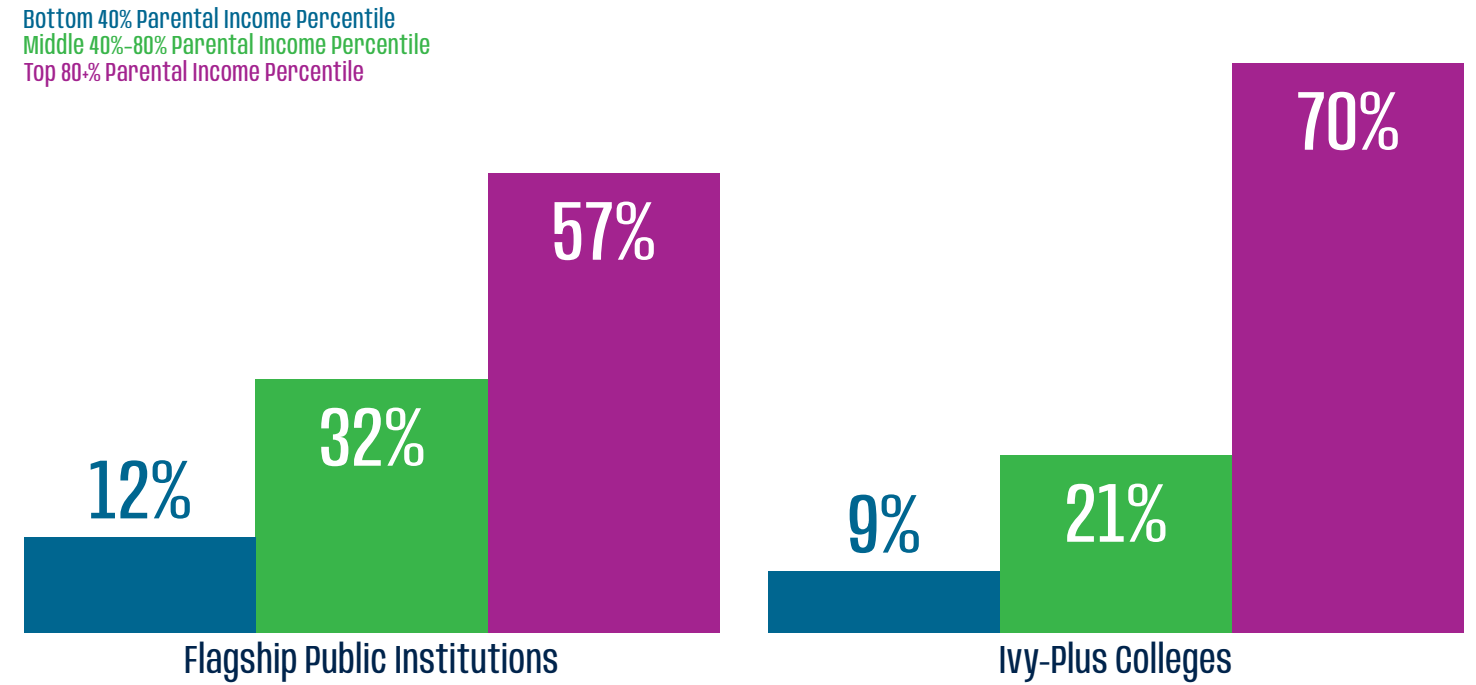


CHART 3
U.S. SHARE OF COLLEGE-AGE POPULATION AND SELECTIVE COLLEGE ENROLLMENT BY RACE, 2019



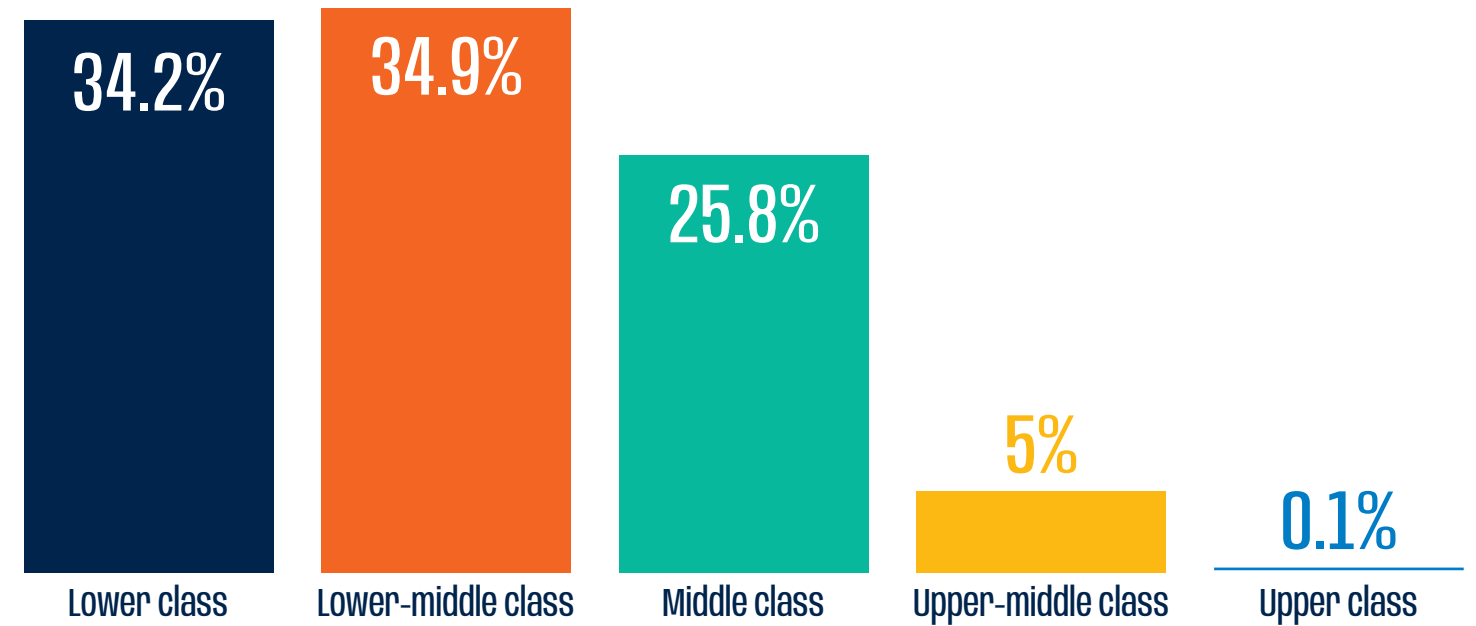
Source: Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce, *Progress Interrupted: Evaluating a Decade of Demographic Change at Selective and Open-Access Institutions Prior to the End of Race-Conscious Affirmative Action*.

CHART 4
U.S. COLLEGE ENROLLMENT BY INSTITUTION TYPE AND STUDENT SOCIOECONOMIC STATUS (SES)



Source: Chetty, R., Deming, D.J., and Friedman, J. (2023, July). *Diversifying Society's Leaders? The Determinants and Causal Effects of Admission to Highly Selective Private Colleges*. National Bureau of Economic Research Working Paper No. 31492.

CHART 5
POSSE ALUMNI ECONOMIC CLASS GROWING UP



Almost 70%
grew up lower-class or lower-middle-class

Koby Altman
President of Basketball Operations, Cleveland Cavaliers
Middlebury College Posse Alum
Posse National Board Member



Lewis & Clark College Alum Henry Ruano with his parents

FAMILY BACKGROUND

While estimates vary—in part due to inconsistent definitions of “first-generation student”—studies suggest that between one-third and half of undergraduates have parents who did not obtain a bachelor’s degree.¹⁰ In the United States, first-generation students who do attend college are more likely to attend a 2-year college and to attend a less-selective institution compared to their peers whose parents earned at least a bachelor’s degree.¹¹

In contrast, 54.5 percent of Posse alumni are first-generation four-year college graduates. Moreover, 25.1 percent of these alumni have parents who neither graduated from high school nor earned a GED.

Household incomes are significantly lower for parents of first-generation students compared to undergraduates whose parents earned a college degree. In 2020, median income for the parents of first-generation students was \$62,000 lower than for the parents of continuing-generation students (\$41,000/year versus \$103,000/year)—a gap that grew by \$13,000 from 2016.¹²

Despite an increase in the share of lower-income students in the overall college-going population, these students are represented at elite institutions of higher education at disproportionately low rates.¹³ Students with parents from the bottom 20 percent of the income distribution make up less than 5 percent of the student bodies at Ivy-plus private institutions¹⁴

Seventy percent of students enrolled at the country’s top colleges come from families with incomes in the top 80th percentile (CHART 4). In comparison, a majority—69.1 percent—of Posse alumni grew up in lower-class or lower-middle-class households (CHART 5).

Additionally, upon matriculation nearly 58.1 percent of Posse alumni were eligible for Pell Grant funding, which is typically awarded to undergraduate students who display exceptional financial need. More than three-quarters qualified for full tuition or more financial aid based on their family’s FAFSA.

54.5% of Posse alumni are first-generation college graduates

STANDARDIZED TEST SCORES

The ongoing debate over the value of standardized tests—specifically the SAT and ACT—has led to efforts to limit their influence in admissions. While a handful of highly selective institutions have recently reinstated the standardized test requirement, more than 80% of universities continue to employ test-optional policies.¹⁵ Moreover, virtually all institutions of higher education in the United States today claim to employ a holistic approach to admissions in which test scores are treated as one factor among many.¹⁶

While holistic measures have been underscored as most valuable, especially in recent years, standardized tests continue to figure prominently in college admissions. Posse's Dynamic Assessment Process (DAP), employs a highly successful tool for evaluating potential that does not rely on

standardized test scores. While most Posse partner schools have median 25th and 75th combined reading and math SAT percentiles of 1270 and 1450 respectively,¹⁷ the median percentiles for Posse alumni are 1050 and 1260, with just 3 percent scoring 1450 or higher.¹

Their test scores notwithstanding, Posse alumni excelled in their studies, were highly engaged members of their campus communities, and graduated at a rate of approximately 90 percent. Their success illustrates well the limitations of standardized testing as a gauge of student potential as well as the effectiveness of DAP.

¹Data are for all Posse alumni.

HIGH SCHOOL EXPERIENCE

The vast majority of Posse alumni attended an urban public high school. Research suggests that students who attend urban public schools are less likely to enroll and persist in college compared to students who attend suburban public schools, and less likely to graduate within six years compared to both suburban and rural public high school attendees.¹⁸

Urban public schools and school districts with the highest proportions of students of color tend to receive less government funding than their suburban and whiter counterparts. According to a Census Bureau study of fiscal year 2023 expenditures, median per-pupil spending was \$16,181 for districts with schools in cities, compared to \$17,476 for suburban school districts. A study from Education Trust found that on average, school districts that serve the most students of color received substantially less (16%) state and local revenue than districts with the fewest students of color.¹⁹

Research demonstrates that educational spending improves students' education attainment, increases wages, and reduces incidents of adult poverty—

effects that are more pronounced for students from low-income families. Conversely, cutting education funding is associated with lowered test scores and rates of college-going.²⁰

Posse partners exclusively with selective four-year institutions of higher education, 85 percent of which are private. Only 32% percent of surveyed alumni believe that their high school prepared them "very well" for the rigors of college (CHART 6). Moreover, Posse alumni reported that their high school friends were much less likely to attend a private four-year institution. More than 15 percent of their friends either did not attend college or went to community or two-year colleges (CHART 7).

Approximately 63 percent of Posse alumni also reported attending higher-ranked colleges than most of their high school friends. While nearly all alumni said they would have applied to a four-year college even without Posse, 73.5 percent indicated they would not have applied to the institutions where they matriculated were it not for the program (CHART 8).

73% of alumni would not have applied to their alma mater without Posse

CHART 6
HOW WELL DID YOUR HIGH SCHOOL PREPARE YOU FOR COLLEGE?

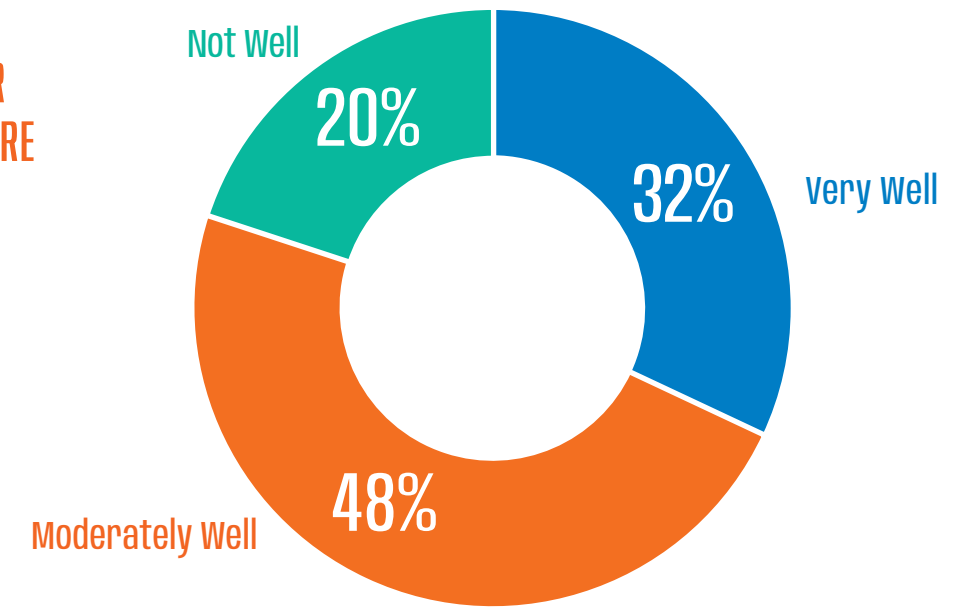


CHART 7
WHERE DID MOST OF YOUR FRIENDS FROM HIGH SCHOOL GO TO COLLEGE?

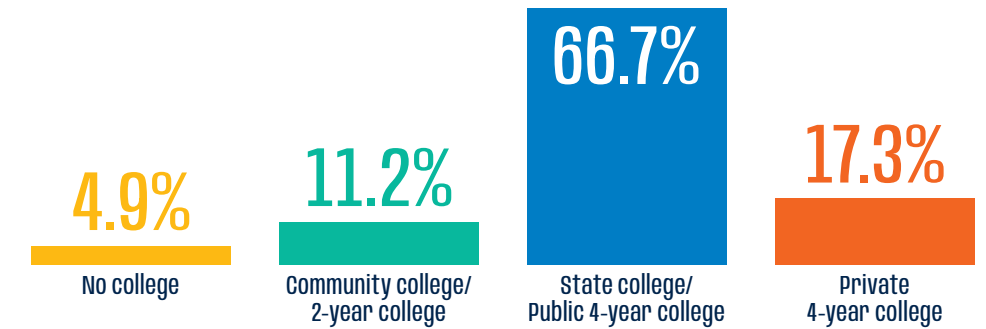
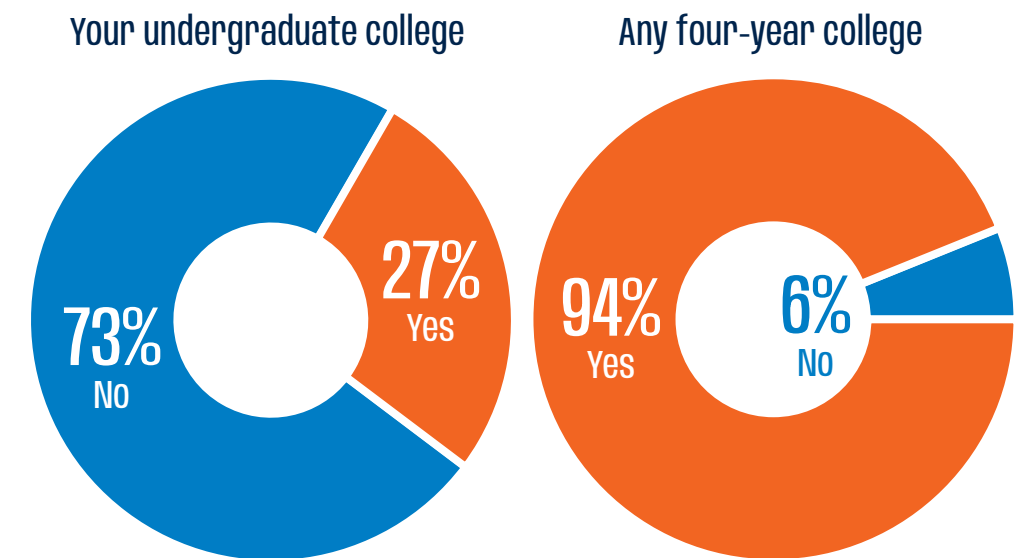


CHART 8
WOULD YOU HAVE APPLIED TO YOUR UNDERGRADUATE COLLEGE OR ANY FOUR-YEAR COLLEGE WITHOUT POSSE?





CONCLUSION

The Posse model was founded on the conviction that diverse teams can accomplish great things and that a student is much more than a test score. Today, 37 years later, Posse alumni are irrefutable proof of the program's success. These dynamic leaders are a growing presence at the highest levels in their fields. They represent a powerful network that embodies our hopes for a better future.

As high school students, Posse alumni demonstrated exceptional leadership potential, earning them full-tuition scholarships to top colleges. As college-goers, they supported each other and built a reputation as thoughtfully engaged members of the campus community—each class blazing the trail for the next.

United by a shared Posse experience and equipped with powerful degrees, Posse alumni are uniquely positioned to make an impact. Whether in education, research, government, law, health, the arts or business, their diverse voices are helping to ensure that every group has a seat at the table.

Today, over 9,000 Posse alumni are living, working and making a difference in 32 countries around the world. By 2035, Posse and its partner colleges project more than 17,000 alumni in the workforce. The Posse Foundation is thrilled to celebrate their achievements to date and cannot wait to see what they do next.

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ENDNOTES

1. Additional Scholars have since graduated, bringing the total number of Posse alumni to more than 9,000.
2. Posse's full alumni dataset is missing slightly more parent education level, first-generation status, and official standardized test score data than the subset of alumni who completed the census. As a result, missing data makes up a higher percentage of all Posse alumni for these three categories.
3. Fall 2021 enrollment in four-year, degree-granting institutions was 56.9% female and 43.1% male. National Center for Education Statistics. Table 303.30. Total fall enrollment in degree-granting postsecondary institutions, by level and control of institution, attendance status, and sex of student: Selected years, 1970 through 2031 [CORRECTED]. (2022). Retrieved November 12, 2025, from Center for Education Statistics: https://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d18/tables/dt18_303.30.asp
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