The Posse STEM Program identifies and supports students from diverse backgrounds interested in majoring in STEM.

In February, college presidents, corporate leaders, foundation representatives and other members of the Posse community gathered to discuss solutions for increasing the number and diversity of STEM graduates and professionals. The day-long conference, entitled “Diversity + STEM = X: Solving the Equation for Higher Education and the Workforce,” celebrated the 10th anniversary of the Posse STEM Program, which was launched in 2012, with Vassar College, the University of Michigan, Brandeis University in 2008. Today, the list of STEM Program partners has grown to include 11 top colleges and universities: Brandeis University, Vassar College, the University of Wisconsin Madison and Wellesley College.

The individual and collective successes of Posse STEM students were featured throughout the day. Scholars and alumni in attendance were joined by presidents of Posse’s partner colleges.

In the University of Virginia and Wesleyan University in recruiting Scholars who are post-9/11 U.S. veterans. The first cohort of Shanghai students were featured at the conference and the Posse STEM Information Technology Senior Director of Higher Education Forum.

Posse partner colleges and universities are critical to advancing the foundation’s mission. Currently, 57 top institutions of higher education are collaborating with Posse to find and prepare the next generation of leaders.
We need more people of all backgrounds to study and persist in STEM. Multiple studies have documented that diversity in STEM teams leads to better problem solving and increased innovation.

We actually already know a great deal about how to change the pattern of underrepresentation of people of color and women in STEM education. First, it is critical to foster intellectual engagement and excitement through passionate teaching and through curricula that connects STEM fields to the interests and concerns of a diverse student body.

Second, success requires building a climate of belonging for all students. It demands a practice of identifying and addressing unconscious bias in our assignment, is being able to show that we teach them.

Third, we must ensure that we work with students to cultivate the requisite STEM skills and knowledge for success. That is why Posse, and in particular STEM Posse, is so important. It identifies students with interests, aptitude, leadership skills, and resilience to undertake STEM majors and sends them to first-rate colleges and universities offering rigorous academic skill development.

The power of the F&M example, I think, is that one of the most rigorous academic programs in the country is a great fit for talented, highly motivated first-gen students.

And what’s been inspiring to see is that this program has led our faculty to embrace the notion that first-gen students and lower-income students can thrive at our institution.

Back in 2011, when we began developing our talent strategy to expand financial aid and recruit top low-income students, some well-intended colleagues worried that we wouldn’t identify the right students, and so they would be hurt by going into a program that wasn’t a good fit.

In every single one, we talk about diversity. Which is to say, what exclusion and under-representation of women and racial and ethnic minorities in STEM is a grave social injustice. When intentional biases, unconscious attitudes, institutional structures, and lack of action to effect change combine to deprive members of minority groups and women from entering and succeeding in STEM fields, we are diminished and we all lose.

Just over half of our K-through-12 student body as a whole in terms of grades, retention, graduation at or above full student-body levels in STEM Posse cohorts have achieved which students who are underrepresented in STEM fields, we all lose.

Over the next decade, STEM jobs are expected to grow by 13 percent, outpacing growth in other fields.

It’s actually hard to draw a straight line from being a kid from my background to becoming someone doing research as an adult.

The thing that I want people to draw from this story is that I was incredibly lucky. You can’t have a person who held my hand at each stage, until grad school.

There are many other kids who are fully ready, who are equally excited about many different things. The only difference between them and me is that I was much luckier than they are. How many driven kids are out there? And without people to hold their hands along the way, how will they ever be able to reach their full potential?

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Cavaliers General Manager, Posse Alumnus Joins Board

Koby Altman is the newest member of the Posse Board of Directors.

Koby became general manager (GM) of the Cleveland Cavaliers this past summer. At 35, he is the second youngest GM in the NBA.

Koby is the perfect example of the type of leader Posse seeks to foster—someone with vision and courage.

Koby grew up in Brooklyn, New York, and played varsity basketball in high school. After winning a Posse Scholarship to Middlebury, he earned a spot on their men’s basketball team as starting point guard—a position he played for much of his college career.

“I jumped on that opportunity because I knew Posse was going to give me a chance to do great things with my life.”

After graduation, Koby explored a career in real estate before circling back to basketball. While pursuing a master’s degree in sports management at the University of Massachusetts Amherst, he joined the coaching staff at Amherst College. He spent time managing teams for USA Basketball and as an assistant coach at Columbia University before taking a position with the Cavaliers in 2012.

“Koby is the perfect example of the type of leader Posse seeks to foster—someone with vision and courage,” says Posse Board Chair Brad Singer. “We are excited to have him on the national board.”

Posse Alumnus Joins Board

Middlebury College Posse Alumnus Koby Qader

Koby Altman, the general manager of the Cleveland Cavaliers.

Koby credits an experience abroad for inspiring his innovative start-up.

Abu Qader, a first-year scholar at Cornell University, has always been an avid learner. As a boy he read voraciously and made a habit of taking apart computers to explore how they worked.

Abu’s intellectual curiosity and lifelong enthusiasm for computers is paying off. In addition to bringing a full-time college student, he is also the founder and chief technology officer of GliaLab, a software firm that uses artificial intelligence to “predict the future.”

The work has been acknowledged in the creation of GliaLab.

The work has been acknowledged as groundbreaking. Abu was invited to speak at last summer’s Google I/O Conference and at a TedxTeen talk in London.

At the Google conference, Abu presented on the ways machine learning and artificial intelligence (A.I.) can be used in the fight to detect cancer as early as possible. He met with Google CEO Sunday Pichai and connected with many leaders in the A.I. field.

A computer science major, Abu Qader is a first-year Posse Scholar at Cornell University.

Abu Qader’s research has been acknowledged in the creation of GliaLab, a software firm that uses artificial intelligence to “predict the future.”

At the end of the night’s program, guests were treated to a performance by comedian Hasan Minhaj, a correspondent on The Daily Show and host of the 2017 White House Correspondents’ Association dinner. Gala supporters included major corporate and philanthropic leaders, Posse Scholars and alumni, partner school representatives, friends and extended community members. Posse thanks all of the generous sponsors who helped make the 2018 gala a resounding success.

The Heckscher Foundation Funds Posse Consulting

Posse Annual Gala Raises $2.2 Million, Honors Stars

The Heckscher Foundation has been a generous supporter of Posse over the past four years.

Since 2014, Heckscher—which funds youth-serving organizations across the country—has awarded Posse $770,500 in grants to develop its consulting initiative. Today Posse Consulting works with a wide array of companies, institutions and organizations to increase access and strengthen diversity.

“We worked closely with Posse leadership to develop a funding approach that would be consistent with our focus on venture philanthropy,” says Heckscher Foundation CEO Peter Sloane. “We are gratified that it has proven so successful.”

Heckscher Foundation CEO Peter Sloane.

Heckscher Consulting offers expertise in curriculum development, program design and workshop facilitation, among other services. Clients to date have included Bloomberg LP, Brandeis University, The College Board, Comedy Central, Google, Harvard University Graduate School of Education, Massachusetts Department of Health, NYU’s Stern School of Business and Viacom.

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Dr. Shirley Collado has been named the new president of Ithaca College in Ithaca, New York. A member of the inaugural Posse that matriculated at Vanderbilt University in 1989, Shirley previously served as executive vice chancellor and chief operating officer at Rutgers University-Newark. She began her tenure as president in July 2017, becoming Ithaca’s first president of Latina heritage in the institution’s 125-year history.

“I am incredibly honored and humbled to be Ithaca’s ninth president,” says Shirley. “When I think about this incredible opportunity, my academic career, and where I started, it’s difficult to overstated the importance of my Posse experience. Twenty-eight years ago, Posse took a chance on me, and from that one opportunity sprang so many others. My family and I are forever grateful.”

Shirley, who holds a doctorate in psychology from Duke University, grew up in the Sunset Park neighborhood of Brooklyn, New York, the only girl in a traditional, immigrant family from the Dominican Republic. With parents who worked long hours—her father as a cabdriver and her mother as a clothing factory worker—Shirley spent much of her adolescence taking care of her two younger brothers and working at the local pharmacy to contribute to the household.

“Shirley’s story is so powerful, not just as an example for others hoping to forge a similar path, but also in its ability to inform the way we think about student potential in higher education,” says Posse President and Founder Deborah B. “Her story—and the stories of thousands of Posse alumni—shows what is possible when students receive educational opportunities that match their great potential. We could not be more proud.”

The Posse Foundation’s partner colleges and universities award full-tuition leadership scholarships to students who demonstrate exceptional leadership potential. Scholars Win Prestigious Fellowships, including awards from Fulbright, Gilman, Mellon, Watson, Watson & Company, and the National Science Foundation, among others.

10th Annual Posse Alumni Leadership Conference July 28, 2018
The Alumni Leadership Conference is a unique networking opportunity for Posse alumni to come together in New York City. The event features guest speakers, career workshops, and graduate school and fellowship info sessions.

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—Posse Scholars. Founded in 1989, The Posse Foundation has awarded nearly 7,500 full-tuition leadership scholarships to students from a broad range of professional fields.