

## The JBHE Foundation

---

Here Comes the Posse: A New Program to Increase Racial Diversity on the Nation's Most Selective College Campuses

Reviewed work(s):

Source: *The Journal of Blacks in Higher Education*, No. 48 (Summer, 2005), pp. 36-37

Published by: [The JBHE Foundation](#)

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/25073228>

Accessed: 03/01/2012 09:56

---

Your use of the JSTOR archive indicates your acceptance of the Terms & Conditions of Use, available at <http://www.jstor.org/page/info/about/policies/terms.jsp>

JSTOR is a not-for-profit service that helps scholars, researchers, and students discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content in a trusted digital archive. We use information technology and tools to increase productivity and facilitate new forms of scholarship. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.



*The JBHE Foundation* is collaborating with JSTOR to digitize, preserve and extend access to *The Journal of Blacks in Higher Education*.

<http://www.jstor.org>

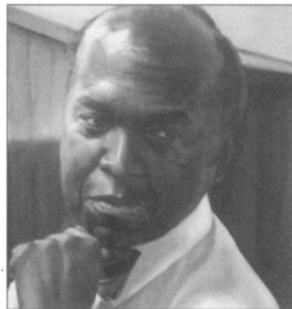


*Eileen Jackson Southern,  
Harvard's first tenured  
black woman professor.*

• David L. Evans is an electrical engineer who worked on the Apollo project which sent men to the moon in 1969. A graduate of Tennessee State University, Evans did his graduate work at Princeton University. While at NASA, Evans began efforts to encourage young blacks to apply to the nation's most selective predominantly white colleges and universities. His work caught the attention of the Harvard admissions office and Evans agreed to take a two-year leave of absence to work to make Harvard more racially diverse.

Evans never returned to NASA. As senior admissions officer at Harvard for more than 30 years, Evans is credited with bringing in 15 times as many African-American students to Harvard than had matriculated in the previous 334 years. In 2003 the university established a scholarship fund in his name.

To some observers, Harvard's portrait gallery effort is viewed as a cosmetic effort to deflect attention away from public concerns about the sincerity of Harvard's commitment to gender and racial equity in higher education. Despite the efforts of former president Neil Rudenstine, little progress has been made in recent years in increasing the percentage of black faculty. JBHE data shows that Harvard has a smaller percentage of blacks on its faculty than all other Ivy League institutions with the exception of Princeton University.



*David L. Evans  
For many years he was  
Harvard College's senior  
admissions officer.*

#### White Jurors Only

"Do not take Jews, Negroes, Dagos, Mexicans, or a member of any minority race on a jury no matter how rich or how well educated. They will not do on juries."

— A manual for local Texas prosecutors published in 1963 by the Dallas County district attorney's office. The manual was cited in *Miller-El v. Dretke*, a June 13, 2005, decision by the U.S. Supreme Court reversing a death penalty conviction in a case where blacks were illegally excluded from the jury.

#### □ Here Comes the Posse: A New Program to Increase Racial Diversity on the Nation's Most Selective College Campuses

*The Posse Foundation of New York City uses a unique screening process to identify inner-city black and other minority students who show capability of succeeding at our most prestigious and usually academically rigorous colleges and universities. There are 23 participating institutions that agree to admit a team, or posse, of at least 10 students each year. All have successfully navigated through the foundation's intense screening process.*

On page 28 of this issue of JBHE we report the snail-like progress of many prestigious colleges and universities in increasing the number of African-American students on their campuses. But some colleges and universities such as Vanderbilt University, Bowdoin, Middlebury, Trinity, and Pomona have made tremendous strides over the past decade in increasing the number of black students on campus. Perhaps it is no coincidence that all of these schools are participating members in the Posse Foundation, a program that identifies disadvantaged students from inner-city public high schools and provides them scholarships and training so they can succeed at our elite colleges and universities.



Here's how the program works. School and community leaders in five large cities — New York, Boston, Chicago, Los Angeles, and Washington, D.C. — nominate students from disadvantaged backgrounds from the local public school system. The foundation seeks students who have tremendous potential but would probably not gain admission to elite colleges and universities under the regular admissions process.

---

*"About 90 percent of Posse scholars have gone on to graduate from college. This exceeds the overall black student college graduation rate at each participating institution in the Posse program."*

---

From September through December of the students' senior year, Posse Foundation officers in each city put the nominees through what it calls its "Dynamic Assessment Process." This series of workshops evaluates students' leadership qualities, their ability to work with a diverse team, and their motivation to succeed.

About 60 percent of the nominated students are invited back for the second phase of the selection process. At this stage candidates undergo a series of interviews with Posse staff. A group, or posse, of 20 students are then selected for each of the 23 participating colleges and universities.\* (See box.) This group of 20 students meets in a group workshop with Posse staff and admissions officials from the particular college or university. All educational institutions that participate in the program agree to admit at least 10 of the 20 students in the posse. The college admissions officials, in consultation with Posse officials, decide which 10 students to admit. The students receive full tuition scholarships to the particular institution.

---

*“After the students come to campus, the posse continues to meet as a group to help each other with the transition to college.”*

---

Many colleges use the Posse Foundation program not only to increase racial diversity on campus but also to increase the geographic diversity of their student bodies. For example, Grinnell College in Iowa does not sponsor a posse from nearby Chicago schools but rather takes its students from Los Angeles and Washington, D.C. Pomona College in Claremont, California, does not take a posse from nearby Los Angeles public schools but rather it takes high school students from Chicago.

Once the posse is formed, students spend the next eight months preparing for the transition to college. Each week for two hours they meet with other students in the posse and staff trainers from the Posse Foundation. Emphasis is placed on team-building skills, communication, leadership training, and academic excellence. In the summer after their high school graduation, the posse students go on a three-day retreat which further strengthens their bond to other students in their posse.

After the students come to campus, the posse continues to meet as a group to help each other with the transition to college. A faculty mentor is appointed to the posse and meets weekly with the entire group and also individually with each posse member. Because many of the participating colleges are small liberal arts institutions in rural, mostly white areas of the nation, the bond that these students have formed

---

\*Both the University of Wisconsin and DePauw University take posses from two different cities. Grinnell College, which admits a full 10-student posse from Los Angeles public schools, also splits a 10-member posse from Washington, D.C., with Bucknell University.

### Colleges and Universities That Accept a Posse of Disadvantaged Students Each Year

*(Colleges are listed by the city from which they accept public school students)*

#### BOSTON

Bowdoin College  
Bryn Mawr College  
Hamilton College

#### CHICAGO

Carleton College  
Denison University  
DePauw University  
University of Illinois  
University of Wisconsin  
Pomona College

#### LOS ANGELES

Claremont McKenna College  
Grinnell College  
University of Wisconsin

#### NEW YORK

Babson College  
Brandeis University  
Colby College  
DePauw University  
Dickinson College  
Franklin and Marshall  
Lafayette College  
Middlebury College  
Trinity College  
Vanderbilt University  
Wheaton College

#### WASHINGTON, D.C.

Grinnell College  
Bucknell University  
*Source: Posse Foundation.*

*Note: Both the University of Wisconsin and DePauw University take posses from two different cities. Grinnell College, which admits a full 10-student posse from Los Angeles public schools, also splits a 10-member posse from Washington, D.C., with Bucknell University.*

with each other before coming to campus provides a needed support group. The posse, in effect, becomes an extended family.

---

*“Over 1,200 students have completed the program and received full-tuition scholarships.”*

---

The striking statistic is that about 90 percent of Posse scholars have gone on to graduate from college. This is more than double the graduation rate of black students nationally and exceeds the regular black student graduation rate at each participating college.

Established 16 years ago, the Posse Foundation has greatly expanded in recent years. Over 1,200 students have completed the program and received full-tuition scholarships, and nearly 500 of these students have graduated from college in the Posse program over the past two years.

The Posse Foundation is funded by corporations, philanthropic organizations, and individual donors. Two organizations that contribute the most funding to the Posse Foundation are Goldman Sachs and NFL Charities.