

Freeman helps Posse scholars take care of business

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Freeman students Chris Starr (BSM '28) and Zoe Sanchez (BSM '28) are members of Tulane's L.A. Posse. The Posse Foundation recruits outstanding underrepresented students and gives them a full-tuition scholarship to attend universities across the United States.

After completing a four-hour-long interview with the Posse Foundation, Chris Starr (BSM '28) knew that if he were chosen for a scholarship, he'd likely receive a phone call that evening.

"I got home at 10 o'clock, and I didn't get a phone call," Starr said. He decided to get ready for bed.

Suddenly, his phone buzzed. The selection committee was asking him to join a Zoom meeting.

“When was the last time you purchased an umbrella?” a committee member asked him. “You’re going to need one because you’re going to Tulane University!”

“It was so crazy,” Starr said. “I was so, so grateful to be given the opportunity.”

Since 1989, the Posse Foundation has recruited outstanding underrepresented students from nine major cities across the U.S. for full-tuition scholarships at 67 partner institutions. Tulane University has been a Posse Foundation partner since 2009, welcoming two cohorts of Posse scholars to campus each year, one from New Orleans and one from Los Angeles. Of the eight students who make up this year’s Los Angeles cohort, two — Starr and Zoe Sanchez (BSM '28) — are enrolled at the Freeman School.

Shira Hussain, director of undergraduate advising at the Freeman School and mentor for Tulane’s L.A. cohort, said the Posse Foundation helps give deserving students from underserved populations the opportunity to earn a college degree.

“These are students who may have fallen through the cracks or who might get overlooked,” Hussain said. “Many of the scholars are first generation or minority students. They all have unique stories and experiences to share.”

To earn one of 10 coveted spots in a Posse, students must be nominated by a high school teacher or guidance counselor and compete with hundreds of other nominees during a series of interviews. Students selected for a Posse go on to complete a 6-month pre-collegiate training program that includes icebreakers, team-building

challenges and group discussions.

The selection process ultimately yields a cohort of students whose strengths and weaknesses complement each other.

“You get this really dynamic group of students who can have very different personalities” Hussain said. “But the commonality is they all want to do well in college.”

The support they receive throughout their education is what sets Posse scholars apart from other scholarship recipients. “With other scholarships, they give you the money and send you on your way,” Sanchez said. “But with Posse, you are guided throughout the whole process.”

The program’s cohort structure creates built-in support. Posse scholars enroll as a cohort — or Posse — comprising 10 peers from a given location. Starr and Sanchez, for example, are both from Los Angeles and have gotten to know one another through weekly Posse meetings where they discuss their college experiences, struggles and successes. For many scholars, their Posse is like a family, offering emotional support and guidance while they are away from home.

“I call it Posse love,” Sanchez said. “When I’m having difficulty, I talk to my Posse mentors, and they give me great advice.”

The Freeman School also provides support to its Posse scholars.

“It comes from the top,” Hussain said. “Dean Goes, Dean Yest and their offices have been incredibly supportive of me and the Posse Scholars. Our Equity, Diversity and

Inclusion team also fosters a supportive environment for underrepresented populations.” Hussain said Freeman faculty and administrators regularly check in on scholars in the program.

Starr and Sanchez are both eager to take advantage of the opportunities that Freeman affords.

Starr, who is interested in entrepreneurship and visual art, started his own business when he was in eighth grade. “One of my family members wanted to purchase one of my art pieces, and that’s what started the idea,” he said. In just a few years, Starr’s business has boomed, and some of his abstract artworks now sell for thousands of dollars.

In addition to running his own art shop through Etsy and Instagram, Starr hopes to highlight other small businesses like his. “I want to start a club focusing on entrepreneurs in New Orleans,” he said. “I want to host monthly pop-up shops selling their work so I can make use of this culture of creativity.”

Sanchez said she hopes to use her Freeman business degree to pursue a career in fashion design.

“To be a fashion designer, you have to understand marketing, manufacturing and suppliers,” she said. “So I knew that I wanted to be a business major.”

Though she is only in her first semester, Sanchez already had the opportunity to meet one of the biggest names in business and fashion, shoe designer Stuart Weitzman, when he visited the Freeman School earlier this year.

“It was a great opportunity to get to show him my designs and get his input,” Sanchez said. “He liked one of my designs in particular. He gave me great advice, and I was inspired to keep making designs and pursuing fashion.”

Sanchez is currently a member of the Tulane Fashion Club, holding positions on the web team and the garment team. At the Freeman School, she is a member of the FinTech Investing Club and is representing Tulane in the 2025 National Diversity Case Competition, a contest in which student-teams develop solutions to diversity-related business cases.

Sanchez said her extracurricular involvement is an opportunity to grow personally and professionally. “I know I’ll be able to grow at Freeman,” she said. “And I’m beyond grateful for this opportunity.”

As one of her Tulane mentors, Hussain is excited to see that growth.

“Chris and Zoe have grit and drive to soak up what Freeman has to offer,” she said.