



This group of inner-city high school seniors from Atlanta will attend BU this fall as Posse scholars.

BRINGING THE POSSE PARTNERSHIP PREPS CITY KIDS FOR COLLEGE

LAST DECEMBER, in an auditorium in downtown Atlanta, twelve inner-city high school seniors — the newest members of the Class of 2012 — wriggled into Boston University sweatshirts.

The ceremony marked the launch of a partnership between BU and the Posse Foundation, a national nonprofit program that recruits and prepares groups of talented, leadership-oriented urban high school students for life at colleges and universities around the country. Members of the posses, as they're called, for the most part come from the same public school system. The idea is simple: a small team of like-minded kids from similar backgrounds can "back each other up" in what can be a bewildering new world.

The Posse Foundation is the brainchild of Deborah Bial, an education strategist and MacArthur Foundation genius grant recipient. In the late 1980s, Bial became alarmed by the number of inner-city kids quitting college — often intelligent, talented students who felt culturally and racially isolated at school. One told Bial at the time, "I never would have dropped out if I had my posse with me." Since 1989, the Posse

Foundation has placed 1,850 students in top-tier institutions, representing more than \$175 million in scholarships.

In December, Laurie Pohl, vice president for enrollment and student affairs at BU, and several representatives from the University's Office of Admissions flew to Atlanta to join the students and their families, friends, guidance counselors, and principals for the awards banquet. The previous week, they'd finalized the team of twelve scholars, some

of them the first in their families to attend college. The selection process involves a comprehensive assessment developed by the Posse Foundation, as well as interviews conducted by administrators from the participating university.

"These students are highly accomplished," Pohl says, "but they're in high school environments where the opportunities just aren't available to really challenge and push them. If you look at their test scores, they're going to be flying below the radar of selective institutions."

An intense eight-month training program, which began in January, will prepare the Posse scholars for campus life and will strengthen their bond. They will take part in workshops that focus on team building, cross-cultural communication, leadership, and academic excellence. Once on campus, they will meet regularly with a University mentor.

"BU is a big school, and having a posse with you makes all the difference," says Shaylithia Copeland, born and raised in downtown Atlanta and a Carver High School senior. "For a lot of kids, when they're pulled away from their friends and family and don't have that same support structure anymore, it can feel like, 'Maybe I need to be at home where everybody else is.'"

Pohl says BU plans to take a posse every fall. **CB B**

BU BOND RATING GETS DOUBLE BOOST

Boston University's bond rating, which indicates the University's credit standing and affects interest rates on existing debts, has been upgraded by Moody's and by Standard & Poor's, the two largest rating agencies in the world. Standard & Poor's upgraded BU's long-term rating to A-, up from BBB+, while Moody's maintained the A3 rating but revised the outlook from "stable" to "positive." These agency reviews were undertaken in connection with the University's planned issuance of a bond financing in late March.

Both reports cited an increasing applicant pool, a strong operating performance, expectations of enhanced fundraising, and recent good returns on the University's endowment as reasons for the upgrade. The Standard & Poor's report also noted the 2007 hiring of a chief investment officer to help build an investment office to manage the \$1.2 billion endowment.

Both agencies identified BU's debt burden of \$1.2 billion as a potential challenge to the University's rating, but also noted that the debt profile is based largely on the campus improvements of the past ten years and that the University has no additional debt plans in the near future. **JU**