

Subject: UW Posse Alumni: Highlights from Spring 2025

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From: UW-Madison Posse Program

To: ALEJANDRO DE LA TORRE

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Welcome New Alumni!

Posse Alumni Newsletter – Spring 2025 Edition

Dear UW Posse Alumni,

We are thrilled to **welcome the Posse Class of 2025 to the UW-Madison alumni family!** This semester has been full of milestones, brilliance, and community across the on-campus scholar community. We also want to report that our UW Posse Program achieved an **all-time high 95.1% six-year graduation rate**. Our goal continues to be to support each and every Posse Scholar from the day they get the "phone/zoom call" through to graduation. Your brilliance, resilience, and leadership continue to make us proud. Below are just a few highlights we're proud to share.



This spring, we proudly celebrated our newest graduates at the 2025 Posse Senior Celebration. From across all four cities, these scholars have completed their academic journeys and are now joining our vibrant alumni community.



The 2025 UW-Madison Posse Graduates, May 2025

Congratulations to the Class of 2025!

Your leadership, brilliance, and persistence have shaped the UW–Madison Posse community in ways that will be felt for years to come. As you turn the page into this exciting new chapter, we're thrilled to welcome you into the ever-growing Posse alumni family. You now join a powerful network of scholars, advocates, and changemakers across the country. To our wider alumni community, we invite you to celebrate these new grads, cheer them on, and keep building the connections that make our Posse family strong. [Explore each city's grads & learn more about their next steps below:](#)

[Chicago](#)

[Los Angeles](#)

[Washington, DC](#)

[New York](#)



Celebrating Our Standout Grads

Among our incredible new alumni are a few Posse graduates whose accomplishments were recently highlighted by the Division of Diversity, Equity & Educational Achievement (DDEEA). We invite you to read their reflections and learn more about where they're headed next — from graduate school to the public sector, to national fellowships and more. Their stories are a testament to the brilliance, purpose, and resilience found throughout the entire Class of 2025.

[Read the Full Article](#)



Alumni Shoutouts – Graduate School Milestones

We're proud to celebrate our Posse alumni who have recently completed their graduate programs! Congratulations on these tremendous accomplishments:

- **Dr. Abigail Catania** (Chicago 13), *Doctor of Education (EdD), Higher Education Leadership & Policy* – Vanderbilt University
- **Elisa Cruz, MSEM** (Chicago 13), *Master of Engineering (MEng), Engineering Management* – University of Wisconsin–Madison
- **Alexander Roman, MA** (Chicago 17), *Master of Arts (MA), Higher & Postsecondary Education* – Columbia University, Teachers College

If you're a Posse alum who has recently graduated from a graduate or professional program, we want to hear from you! (No, it is not bragging and, yes, we do care)! Email us (reply to this email) to be featured in our next issue.



Thank You for Supporting Our Baby Posses!

We are overwhelmed with gratitude for the incredible support from our Posse alumni community. Earlier this month, we launched a [small fundraiser](#) to help incoming baby Posse Scholars cover the cost of travel to UW–Madison for SOAR — an experience that has always been central to our scholars' success and sense of belonging. Thanks to your tremendous generosity, we met our fundraising goal of \$2,800 in just 34 minutes. Every dollar will go directly toward making sure each student in need can be present for this powerful summer orientation experience.

Your support is more than a donation — it's a message to the next generation that the Posse network is alive, strong, and rooted in love.

Help Baby Posse Scholars attend SOAR

Help Dropy Posse Scholars attend SWAR



Marla Delgado-Guerrero is organizing this fundraiser.



\$3,045 raised

Share

The organizer has currently disabled new donations to this fundraiser.

Alina Benun
\$500 · 15 d

Anonymous
\$300 · 15 d

Anug Saha
\$110 · 15 d

Elizabeth Vazquez
\$150 · 15 d

Anonymous
\$200 · 15 d

On behalf of our scholars and staff, thank you for showing up. We're so lucky to have alumni like you. To continue your giving efforts, feel free to donate to [supportuw.org/giveto/posse!](https://supportuw.org/giveto/posse)

Alumni Spotlight: Eder Valle (LA I)



We're proud to celebrate **Eder Valle (LA I)**—one of our very first UW–Madison Posse Scholars from Los Angeles—whose inspiring journey and entrepreneurial spirit were recently featured in the Wisconsin Alumni Association stories.

Eder is the founder of **Artesan Fruit**, a vibrant small business rooted in community and tradition. From sourcing locally grown fruit to sharing culturally rich experiences, Artesan Fruit is not just a business—it's a reflection of Eder's vision for sustainability, creativity, and cultural pride.

[Read the Article](#)

His story is a powerful reminder of the excellence and heart our alumni bring to everything they do.



Chancellor's Award & Research Fellows Spotlight

We are proud to celebrate UW Posse Scholars who were recognized this spring for their outstanding academic work and research excellence at the **2024–2025 Chancellor's Undergraduate Awards Ceremony**. Their achievements are a testament to the intellectual rigor, curiosity, and leadership that define our community.



(Right): Alissa Choi, (Center): Akesh Mallia, (Left): Vivian Wanjing

National Award: Goldwater Scholar

Alissa Choi (NY 12) – Chemistry, Geology & Geophysics

Alissa has been named a **2025 Goldwater Scholar**, one of the most prestigious undergraduate scholarships in the natural sciences, mathematics, and engineering. The **Goldwater Scholarship** supports students committed to pursuing research careers, with only a select number honored nationally each year.

At UW–Madison, Alissa has conducted research in both geochemistry and atmospheric chemistry, working on projects ranging from iron isotope systems to the role of bromine in Arctic atmospheric chemistry. Her dedication spans disciplines — combining fieldwork, lab analysis, and advanced modeling — and her work has been supported by fellowships such as WISCIENCE and SSEC. This honor reflects both her academic depth and her vision for making impactful contributions to climate and planetary science. [Read more about Alissa's award here.](#)

Sophomore Research Fellowship Awardees

The **Sophomore Research Fellowship (SRF)** supports outstanding second-year students engaging in mentored research with UW faculty. Sponsored by the Chancellor's Office and the Wisconsin Alumni Research Foundation (WARF), the award recognizes early-career scholars poised to lead in their fields.

Akesh Mallia (DC 16) – Mechanical Engineering

Project: *Shaking Camp Randall Stadium: A Vibrational Analysis*

Akesh's research uses engineering modeling and simulation to analyze vibrational forces during live events at Camp Randall Stadium, contributing to safer and more resilient infrastructure.

Vivian Wanjing (NY 13) – Environmental Engineering

Project: *Optimizing Plant Water Use in Agrivoltaic Systems: A Low-Cost Heat Pulse Sensor Approach*

Vivian is designing a low-cost soil moisture sensor to improve water efficiency in agrivoltaic systems — spaces that integrate agriculture and solar power. Her work merges sustainability with practical, scalable technology.

[Read More](#)

Posse Scholars Shine at the 2025 Undergraduate Symposium!





This spring, our Posse Scholars showcased their academic excellence and research acumen at the **2025 Undergraduate Symposium** held at Union South. Representing disciplines across the sciences, social sciences, and humanities, these students delivered compelling poster and oral presentations that tackled complex, real-world questions with innovation and care.

Here are the incredible scholars who presented:

Victoria Alemayehu (CH 22): "Investigating the Dietary Sources of Nutritive and Caloric Content in Nonhuman Primates"

Explored how different food sources—like enrichment treats and medications—impact obesity in captive macaques.

Daniela Luseko (DC 15): "Digital Campaigning and Its Role in Shaping Far-Right Ideologies Among Young People in Portugal"

Analyzed how digital media influences political leanings among Portuguese youth, with implications for European democracy.

Michael Samson (CH 23): "Chinese EV Industrial Policies"

Evaluated how policy strategies in China and the U.S. affect global electric vehicle innovation and green energy transitions.

Sakeef Sekender (LA 22): "How Interactive Online Tools Shape Understanding of Investments and Compound Interest"

Used financial literacy tools to study how students understand investment and interest through digital simulations.

Jillian King (LA 21): "Development of Racial Identity Through White Eyes"

Explored how white families develop children's racial identity and antiracist attitudes through interviews and thematic analysis.

Joseph Munoz (CH 20): "Investigating the Role of Bacteria in Imperiled Freshwater Mussel Conservation"

Used genetic sequencing to study how bacteria influence mortality and reintroduction success in endangered mussels.

Rita Dinh (CH 22): "Development of a Culturally and Linguistically Informed Pain Expression Library and Assessment Module for Minorities Using AI"

Helped build a pain-expression tool that incorporates minority linguistic patterns to reduce bias in clinical pain assessment.

Preston Onuselogu (LA 22): "Approximating Nuclear Power Output by Analyzing the Change in Intensity of Cherenkov Light Using a Photodiode Contained in a Jar"

Engineered a cost-effective device to measure nuclear reactor output using light intensity sensors.

Maria Martinez (CH 23): "Cell Cycle Analysis of Cholangiocarcinoma Organoids Response to Cisplatin and SY-5609 Treatment"

Investigated how combining two cancer drugs impacts cell cycle arrest in a liver cancer model, supporting targeted therapy.

Fouzia Alam (NY 14): "Effect of CACNA1F Mutation on Retinal Structure in a CSNB Mouse Model"

Studied how a gene mutation affects retinal health in mice, with implications for understanding and treating night blindness.

Yasin Omer (CH 22): "Artificial Intelligence to Enhance Inpatient Communication: Understanding Caregiver Preferences for Medical Document Summarization"

Used caregiver interviews to guide AI-based tools that simplify inpatient medical notes for families navigating pediatric care.

2025 Udall Scholars: Helena Bello & Alissa Choi

Please join us in congratulating **Helena Bello (DC 14)** and **Alissa Choi (NY 12)**—two remarkable UW–Madison Posse Scholars—on being named **2025 Udall Scholars**, one of the nation's most prestigious honors for undergraduates committed to careers in environmental policy, Tribal public policy, or healthcare. Sponsored by the Morris K. Udall and Stewart L. Udall Foundation, the scholarship recognizes students with exceptional leadership, public service, and academic achievement.



Helena Bello (DC 14) was recognized for her environmental leadership, including her tireless advocacy for urban wildlife protection and bird-safe building policies. From community organizing in Washington, D.C., to policy outreach and legislative proposals in Madison, Helena bridges grassroots conservation with systemic change.

Alissa Choi (NY 12), also a 2025 Goldwater Scholar, was selected for the Udall Scholarship in recognition of her contributions to climate science and dedication to science communication. Her dual commitment to research and equity reflects a passion for making environmental knowledge more accessible and actionable.



[Read More](#)



Living the Wisconsin Idea: Alexa Iraheta



Alexa Iraheta (DC 14), political science major with certificates in public and education policy, embodies the Wisconsin Idea through her commitment to inclusive policymaking and public service.

This past year, Alexa interned with both the **Wisconsin State Legislature** and the **White House Initiative on Advancing Educational Equity, Excellence, and Economic Opportunity for Hispanics**. In Madison, she developed a multilingual language access policy proposal to help Wisconsin government agencies better serve English language learners. In D.C., she supported federal programming that aims to improve educational outcomes for Hispanic communities, collecting critical data and working across agencies to advance equity.

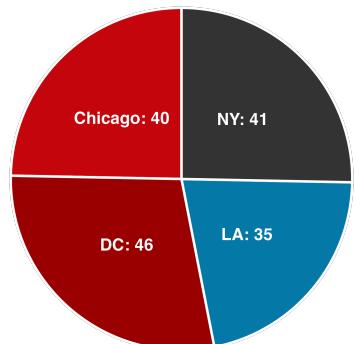
Whether drafting proposals, collecting survey feedback, or amplifying underrepresented voices, Alexa exemplifies how knowledge gained in the classroom can shape more equitable policies in our communities.

[Read More](#)

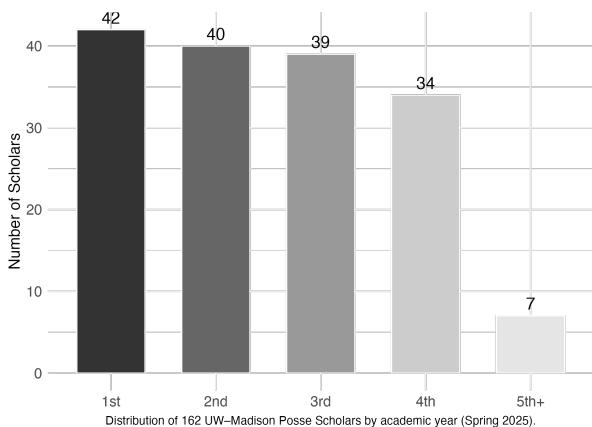
Spring 2025 Academic Highlights

Total UW-Madison Posse Scholars enrolled for the Spring 2025 semester: 162. From this total, 150 of 162 scholars had spring term grades reported at the time of this data; 12 are awaiting transfer of study abroad credits. All data as of May 23rd, 2025

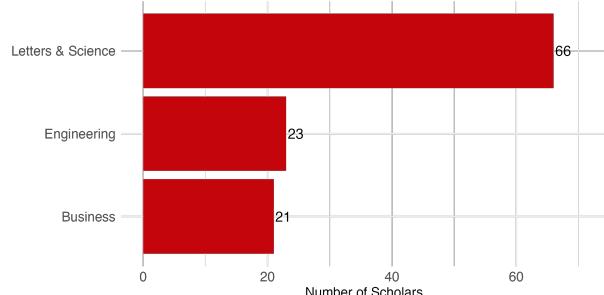
Scholars by City



Scholars by Year

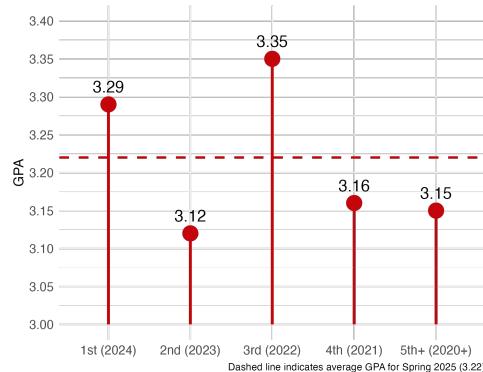


Top Colleges & Schools

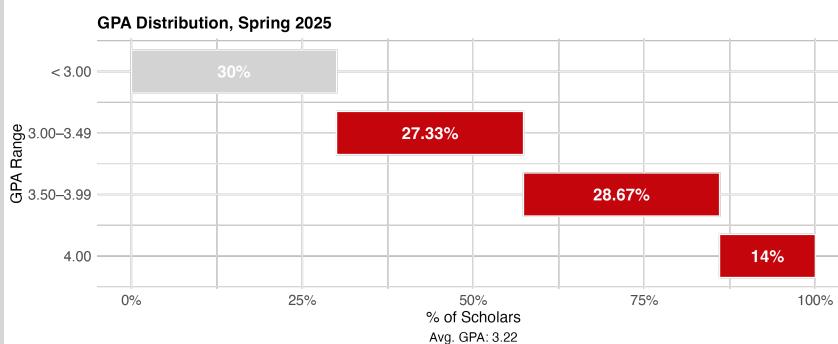


Most Posse Scholars are in Letters & Science, with strong representation in Engineering and Business. 52 scholars are in different schools.

Average GPA by Class Year



Third-years had the highest average GPA (3.35); the overall average semester GPA was 3.22. By contrast, the average cumulative GPA was 3.26



Academic Weapons

During the Spring 2025 semester, of the 150 scholars, **70% earned a 3.0 GPA or higher**, and nearly 43% earned a 3.5 or higher. 21 scholars earned a 4.0 GPA, including 19 full-time students.



Global Scholars

This spring, 13 Posse Scholars studied abroad or away in cities across the globe—including Barcelona, Madrid, Paris, Montpellier, Prague, Singapore, Tokyo, Kathmandu, Brisbane, Washington DC, and New York.

Let's Stay Connected

As we celebrate this season of transitions and milestones, we extend heartfelt congratulations to our newest alumni in the Class of 2025. Whether you're continuing your education, starting new careers, or just catching your breath — we're so proud of you.

If you're an alum looking to get more involved, mentor current scholars, or simply reconnect, we'd love to hear from you. You can [update your contact information](#) below (we are no longer using the old Qualtrics form), and always reach out to us directly. The Posse network is lifelong — and it's strongest when we show up for each other.

[Update Contact Info](#)

Warm regards,

Alejandro De La Torre
Alumni Relations Intern
UW-Madison Posse Program

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