



Posse Scholar

“When my family and I came to tour Villanova, I just fell in love with it. New Orleans is a really tight-knit community, and I could tell that was the case at Villanova too.” —Jene Baquet '26 VSB

From New Orleans to Villanova

With leadership, service and academic excellence as his guideposts, Jene Baquet '26 VSB took the next step in his journey: a prestigious opportunity in Washington, D.C.

Born and raised in New Orleans, Jene Baquet '26 VSB comes from a family with one of the city's longest-running Black-owned business legacies. “We’ve had a restaurant in our family for more than 75 years,” Jene says. “Working in the restaurant industry has played a big part in my life.”

Jene took on the role of part-time assistant manager at Li'l Dizzy's Cafe as a junior in high school when his parents took over the family restaurant in 2021. It's a position that requires good communication, excellent problem-solving, strong leadership and interpersonal skills, attention to detail, and a positive attitude—all while multitasking in a fast-paced environment.

This foundation forged in the Big Easy prepared him to excel as a Posse Scholar—a member of a cohort of academically gifted students with leadership potential from New Orleans who are selected to attend Villanova through a partnership with the Posse Foundation. “Jene is very driven and mature,” says Sonya Williams-Stanton, PhD, an assistant teaching professor in VSB who serves as a mentor for Posse Scholars. “He’s so multidimensional—I am impressed with how well he organizes his days so that he can pursue his various interests while also setting high standards for his academic performance.”

As a team manager and practice player for Villanova Women's Basketball, Jene attends practice almost every day, including weekends, to run drills with the players and support the team. He also plays on Villanova's club basketball team, practicing twice a week with a game on Saturdays, and participates in at least one weekly service event with his brothers in Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity, Inc. In the Competitive Effectiveness course competition, his team won first place for their comprehensive marketing plan for Reckitt's AirWick brand. “It's a thrill for me,” Jene says. “I like going from class to basketball practice to a fraternity event to a networking event for school the next day. That's just how I'm wired.”

This ability to succeed and serve in multiple arenas helped set Jene apart in one of the most competitive applicant pools to date for the Institute of Responsible Citizenship's Washington Program. The two-summer opportunity supports some of the best and brightest African American male college students in the country. One of just 12 students in this year's cohort, Jene is the third Villanovan—and first VSB student—to participate in this highly selective program.

He spent the summer living with his cohort in a university residence hall in Washington, D.C., while completing an internship at Trusted Advisory Group, a D.C.-based management consulting firm focused on the commercial real estate industry. The scholars participated in a challenging seminar on economic and constitutional principles, met with prominent leaders from the public and private sectors, attended personal and professional development workshops, and enjoyed a variety of social activities.

“I'm so grateful for the many opportunities for professional development and growth, and the brotherhood that the Washington Program offers,” Jene says. “Juggling all of that with a 9-to-5 internship really gave me a glimpse of life in business.”

Did you know?

Both previous Villanova Washington Program participants have gone on to succeed in the business world.

- Jay L. Finch '08 CLAS is CEO of Polydelta, a software development company.
- Elliot Williams '16 CLAS is the Arts and Culture reporter for WAMU 88.5, the NPR station for the nation's capital.

The Posse Foundation is one of the nation's most prestigious college access and leadership development programs, known for identifying, recruiting and training students with extraordinary leadership potential who may be overlooked by the traditional admissions process. Since 2019, Villanova has partnered with Posse to bring 10 academically exceptional students from New Orleans to the University each year.

To learn more, visit possefoundation.org