

Patricia Melton

2022 Spotlight Recipient

As an outstanding athlete in college, Melton has applied many competitive and leadership lessons to overcome major challenges in her athletic and professional careers. Resilience and the ability to pivot is baked into her DNA.

The first in her family to attend college, she earned a bachelor's degree at Yale University and a master's degree at Arizona State University. She also served in the U.S. Marine Corps Reserve while at Yale.

A Field Hockey and Lacrosse recruit, after a disappointing season and conflict with her college coach, Melton became a track walk-on. A seven-time Ivy League champion, captain of her team and Track All-American, as a sprinter, she moved to the 400-meter hurdles late in her college career. She was bestowed the highest athletic honor in her Yale class, the Nellie Elliott award. Melton finished her athletic career at the 1988 U.S. Olympic trials where she was a finalist in the 800 meters.

In 2007, she received the NCAA's Silver Anniversary Award, which recognizes former student-athletes who have distinguished themselves in their chosen field. In 2013, she became the first African-American woman to be awarded Yale University's George H. W. Bush Award. For her innovative work in education, in 2022, Melton was selected by CoSIDA as the 2022 Dick Enberg Award recipient.

Patricia Melton, New Haven Promise President, has overseen the disbursement of more than \$25 million in scholarships to more than 2,300 New Haven students. Those students have largely been first-generation, low-income students of color, just as she had been in her hometown of Cleveland, Ohio. Knowing that college completion alone is not enough to secure the Promise mission, Melton established career and civic launch programs to assist students in securing nearly 1,000 paid internships and full-time positions. The program has grown enrollment in the New Haven public schools and increased four-year college degree completion. The Obama White House cited Promise and its peer mentoring efforts as a "promising practice."