

# Annual Alumni Newsletter



HONORS PROGRAM

Dear Honors alumni,

Villanova Honors remembers you. Below, we share highlights from this past year, as well as offer some opportunities for alumni like you to get involved. If you are local, consider coming to campus to hear David Brooks speak on “How to Want the Things Truly Worth Wanting: An Augustinian Approach” on October 21 at 7:00 pm at the law school (register for the event [here](#)). This event was made possible by 3-year grant that from the [Educating Character Initiative](#) at Wake Forest University. If you live on the East Coast, consider joining us for our alumni event, hosted in New York City on February 6 and 7, 2026 (details to follow).

As a member of our esteemed alumni community, your ideas and insights are valuable to us. Please do not hesitate to contact me to share them or just update us on your life beyond graduation.

Warmly,

**Anna Bonta Moreland, PhD**

Anne Quinn Welsh Endowed Chair

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# Educating Character Initiative Institutional Impact Grant

We are thrilled to announce that the Honors Program and the Humanities Department have been awarded a 2025 Educating Character Grant.

This three-year \$822,858 grant has been awarded to support a collaborative project on “Educating Augustinian Character,” under the leadership of Professors Anna Bonta Moreland and Michael Tomko. The focus will be on cultivating the virtues from the Augustinian tradition that can guide us through life's pilgrimage.



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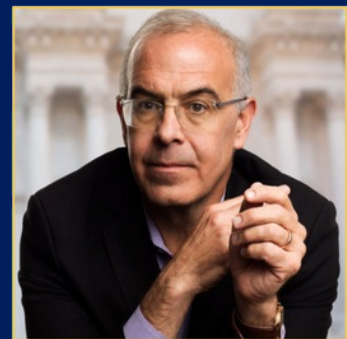
## Join us for the 2025 Department of Humanities Fall Lecture

**When:** October 21, 2025, 7 pm ET

**Where:** Charles Widger School of Law

**What:** This year's presentation will feature *New York Times* columnist David Brooks, who will discuss how to want the things that are truly worth wanting.

This event is cosponsored by the Honors Program and the Eleanor H. McCullen Center for Law, Religion & Public Policy. Reception to follow.



[Click to register](#)

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## Consider becoming an Honors Mentor

Consider volunteering your time as a mentor for current Honors students. Your experience as an undergraduate, and in your life post-graduation, is so valuable to our current students. Being available for a chat or as a professional contact will help our students envision meaningful lives and achieve their goals.

To join the directory, email the following information at the link below:

- Name
- Contact Information (email, phone)

- Job Title
- Area(s) of expertise/interest
- Short bio

Join the mentor directory

## Early donations are now being accepted for 1842 Day

1842 Day officially takes place on September 30, 2025, and this year we're asking for your generous contribution. **But what will be the impact of your donation?**

1842 Day funds facilitate the *Vocare Summer Fellows Program*. Grounded in our belief that advancing the common good is an indispensable ingredient of meaningful work, the Vocare Summer Fellows Program encourages students to build a just and peaceful world.



**Hayley Wilson, 2025 Fellow**

"The Vocare Summer Fellows Program allowed me to pursue a dream internship in one of my favorite countries — something that I never thought I would be able to do. As a fellow, I received \$5000 so that I could accept an unpaid internship at the Marine Protected Area of Punta Campanella in Sorrento, Italy.

"Vocare enabled me to fully immerse myself in meaningful environmental work, connect with international researchers, and envision a career in global corporate sustainability so that my work can contribute to the common good."



**Angelina Rivera, 2025 Fellow**

"As a Vocare Summer Fellow, I received \$3500 so that I could accept an unpaid internship at the Philadelphia Black Women's Health Alliance. I'm a double major in Public Service & Administration and Humanities, and Vocare enabled me to apply what I'm learning in the classroom to real life public health efforts rooted in justice, healing, and relationship building. My work centered on public health outreach to Black women, men, and families, and on expanding services to Spanish-speaking communities. It helped me to envision a career in community based public service and increased my confidence to do that work thoughtfully and effectively."

Your gift will ensure that Honors Program students will continue to benefit from this life-changing academic and professional experience.

**Make a gift to the Honors Program today!**

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## Thesis Spotlight

The Honors Program Class of 2026 is hard at work on their Senior Honors Thesis projects. We're thrilled to highlight the Senior Thesis of Rob Vagnini '26:

Rob's thesis builds on a method for predicting the United States presidential election winner established by historian Allen Lichtman in his book, *The Thirteen Keys to the Presidency*. When asked about his choice in thesis topic, Rob reflects, "While I'm currently studying statistics at Villanova, I've always had a passion for politics. As a math and science student, I've typically steered away from the reading and writing associated with studying government. Yet, elections and the numbers associated with polls, voting, and more, have always fascinated me. My thesis aims to combine the fields of political science with statistics. I look forward to pursuing this research and learning more about the most important aspects that play a role in predicting the U.S. presidential election winner."



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## Alumni Spotlight

Read on below to learn more about the current work of your past classmates and other Honors Program alums.

### Brian Emmert '15

Dr. Emmert is an Assistant Professor of Epilepsy at the Vagelos College of Physicians and Surgeons at Columbia University. As a physician specializing in epilepsy, he is dedicated to the evaluation, management, and treatment of patients with epilepsy.





Regarding the impact of his Honors education, Dr. Emmert states, "My experience in the Honors Program has profoundly shaped my approach to patient care, allowing me to think critically and deeply not only from a scientific standpoint but also from a humanistic perspective."

### Matthew Fagerstrom '20

Matthew is currently a third-year PhD student in the Economics department at the University of Pennsylvania. At present, his academic research explores how legislators can write democratic constitutions that offer robust solutions to high levels of inequality.



According to Matthew, "This work would not have been possible without the support of the Honors Program at Villanova. Because of the time I spent reading Aristotle, Machiavelli, and Montesquieu in Ancients, Moderns, and the Justice seminar, I was able to think more broadly about political institutions."

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## Save the Date: Alumni Happy Hour 2026

Honors Alumni in and around New York City: you are cordially invited to join us for Honors Alumni Happy Hour and a seminar over brunch.

**When:** February 6 - 7, 2026

**Where:** Midtown Manhattan, New York City, NY

**Details:** Join us for a happy hour in Midtown on the evening of Friday, February 6 then attend a book-club style seminar with bagels and coffee on Saturday, February 7 with Dr. Moreland.

*More details to come.*

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# HONORS TEAM



Anna Moreland, PhD  
Director, Honors Program



Terence Sweeney, PhD  
Assistant Teaching Professor



Evelyn Boyden, PhD  
Post-Doctoral Fellow



Catherine Ricketts, MFA  
Director, Program Operations



Emmalee Moffitt-Brown  
Assistant Director



Jaime Haughton  
Program Coordinator



Christine Ciocco  
Program Assistant



Monica Horvath  
Grant Administrator

## Meet the Honors Program Team

We're thrilled to welcome multiple new faces to the Honors team:

**Catherine Ricketts, MFA, Director of Program Operations**, who manages our staff team, liaises with partners across campus, and leads strategic planning.

**Evelyn Boyden, PhD, Post-Doctoral Fellow**, who plays a key role in implementing the Educating Augustinian Character Grant. Dr. Boyden also teaches the Honors PPE Cohort.

**Monica Horvath, Grant Administrator**, who is the newest member of our team and is here to support the Educating Augustinian Character Grant.

Welcome, all!

Please contact [honorsprogram@villanova.edu](mailto:honorsprogram@villanova.edu) with any questions or concerns.

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