A Driving Force
Examining Villanova’s most recent Economic and Social Impact report

America’s Real Sister Act
Uncovering the rich history and untold stories of black nuns in the US Catholic Church

Smart Brain
Engineering professor works with a team of scientists to outsmart traumatic brain injury

When Opportunity & Promise Meet
The O’Toole Family Presidential Scholarship delivers on its promise
Dear Friends,

Villanovans do not rest on their laurels—a truth that is certainly made evident by the stories in this magazine and by the constant activity in our community. Our students are in perpetual motion, filling their years here with classes, research projects, internships, service trips, clubs and teams. Our faculty are inspirations to their students and are making constant advances as leaders and innovators in their fields, while our staff work tirelessly to support and grow all facets of the University. Our alumni go into the world and identify opportunities to make their communities better. Villanovans are restless. We are always striving to become what we are not yet. But what roots us is our common bond to our Augustinian Catholic values—values that inspire us to pursue academic excellence, learn, grow and ignite change, all in service to the greater good.

As we prepare to enter a new decade, we are looking ahead to the next great chapter in the University’s storied history. Throughout the fall, you’ll be hearing more about our ambitious new strategic plan that will shape the next 10 years at Villanova. It’s a plan you helped us write. Over the past two years, we’ve heard from more than 5,000 Villanovans—you’ve told us what’s important to you, what you hold dear about the University, and where you see opportunities to grow. We listened. And together, we will build upon our strengths, honoring the legacy of those who have come before us. We will improve the experience of those who are on campus now, and open our doors wide to those who will join our community in the future. I look forward to sharing the details of this plan with you in the months to come.

Sincerely,

The Rev. Peter M. Donohue, osa, Ph.D., ’75 CLAS
President

The Future’s Bright

PHOTO: BOWSTRING STUDIO; ILLUSTRATION: PETER JAMES FIELD
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Ants Marching
Biology professor studies sticky quality of ants' feet to improve synthetic adhesives

Ants are persistent little creatures that can be hard to get rid of, but Alyssa Stark, PhD, assistant professor of Biology, actually seeks them out because she thinks there is a lot to be learned from their literal ability to stick it out.

“I am interested in the application of bio-inspired design and biomimicry to real-world problems,” Dr. Stark says. “I apply the insights I glean from the mechanistic, performance and behavioral attributes of natural adhesive systems to synthetic adhesive systems.”

Dr. Stark and her research colleague, Stephen Yanoviak, PhD, from the University of Louisville, studied adhesive performance of one species of tropical canopy ant in Panama when sticking to glass, plastic and wood substrates under dry and wet conditions, replicating the highly variable conditions of the tropical canopy. What she learns from ants—as well as from other research into the adhesive qualities of geckos and sea urchins—has vast potential for the creation of sustainable forms of adhesives.

“I am excited by the application of the natural world to solve our own problems... On a small scale, a takeaway from my research may be if and when ants can stick to hot surfaces,” she says. “On a broader scale, my research supplies knowledge for multiple fields to learn from and apply to improve the world around us.”

A Vision for 2030
Villanova University’s next strategic plan

Over the past two years, the University has asked Villanovans: “What is your vision for Villanova’s future?” And thousands of alumni, faculty, staff, students, parents and friends have responded, providing invaluable feedback, ideas and perspectives. Their answers have shaped Villanova’s next strategic plan, a visionary roadmap for the next decade of growth and innovation at the University.

Throughout the fall, University President the Rev. Peter M. Donohue, OSA, PhD, ’75 CLAS will unveil the full details of the new plan, charting a course for the University’s next 10 years. The strategic plan is the result of an inclusive, engaged planning process—led by University Provost Patrick G. Maggitti, PhD, a strategic management expert—that is a reflection of the strength of this community, united in a shared goal to build an even greater Villanova.

“The strategic plan was shaped by the community, for the community. Guided by this vision, Villanova will continue its impressive upward trajectory throughout the next decade, rooted in its Augustinian Catholic values and restless in its desire to ignite change.”

The Rev. Peter M. Donohue, OSA, PhD, ’75 CLAS

5,000+ Villanovans participated in strategic planning process
1,000+ alumni & parents engaged during process
35+ sessions for planning and feedback
6 colleges aligned to move forward

1 united vision for Villanova University’s future
A growing segment of the American workforce is finding its happy place: People who work for themselves as independent contractors and “gig” workers are notably more satisfied with their jobs than traditional 9-to-5 employees, according to a study by Cheryl Carleton, PhD, assistant professor of Economics, and Mary Kelly, PhD, associate chair of Economics, in the Villanova School of Business.

To compare job satisfaction among Americans working in alternative and traditional jobs, the researchers analyzed data of a representative sample of 155 workers collected by the University of Chicago.

“We found that people with more control over their schedules and who could choose which tasks they would take on are significantly more satisfied with their work than their peers who hold regular salaried jobs,” Dr. Kelly explains, adding that this is particularly true among women.

It is estimated that 15 to 20 percent of the entire labor force now works in alternative jobs. While Dr. Carleton and Dr. Kelly don’t anticipate a gig economy takeover, more workers may choose self-employment because of the happiness factor.

“Employers seeking to hire and retain productive and happy workers will need to offer greater autonomy and flexibility so that workers can find their desired work-life balance,” Dr. Carleton says.

Did You Know? Dr. Carleton and Dr. Kelly’s research was the subject of a recent episode of VSB’s Inspiring Minds podcast. More than two dozen faculty scholars from across the college have been interviewed on the podcast by VSB students, offering insights into their recent research projects. Search “Inspiring Minds Villanova Business” in iTunes to download episodes.

Villanova Nurse Honored at the United Nations

Sister Juditha Nekipa, FSW, TS, FCNS, ’17 MIN, ’17 (M)N, a PhD student in the M. Louise Fitzpatrick College of Nursing, received the Inspiring Nurse Award from Nurses with Global Impact during the third annual International Nurses Day at the United Nations in May. Sister Juditha works as a community health nurse and midwife in Kenya and her studies at Villanova have focused on bringing effective, professional nursing care to vulnerable populations, particularly HIV-positive mothers and their babies.

Out of the Office

VSB researchers find gig workers have higher job satisfaction
Across the Universe

Villanova astrophysicists gain international attention for stellar findings

Can life find a way on a cold planet? The answer— that a super-earth such as Barnard b has the potential to sustain life— attracted international attention for Villanova astrophysicists, earning them media coverage in more than 265 outlets.

Edward Guinan, PhD, ’64 CLAS, and Scott Engle, PhD, ’93 CLAS had no idea it would garner so much fanfare when they put together a last-minute poster on the topic with Ignasi Ribas, PhD, director of the Institute of Space Studies of Catalonia, Spain, for the American Astronomy Society this past January.

“Barnard b receives only 2 percent light relative to the Earth and thus is cold. However, all hope for life on Barnard b may not be lost,” the authors wrote. “As a super-earth, Barnard b could have a large hot iron core that could result in enhanced prolonged geothermal activity.”

The collaborators announced their discovery of the super-earth orbiting Barnard’s Star in the journal Nature in 2018. Just six light years away, Barnard b orbits the closest single star to our own sun and is more than three times the size of Earth. However, its estimated surface temperature is minus 238 degrees Fahrenheit, which likely means too covers its rocky terrain.

“This looked like a cold, dead planet, but if it has geothermal heating like Earth, there’s a chance that this planet could potentially harbor primitive life,” Dr. Guinan says. Geothermal heating is heat generated by the Earth itself. Estimated to be about 10,800 degrees Fahrenheit, the temperature of Earth’s inner core heats almost 400 subglacial lakes in Antarctica. In an Astrobiology course Dr. Guinan teaches on extreme life, he and his students explore life in Lake Vostok, the largest of these lakes.

“It didn’t teach that course, I don’t know that I would have thought about the possibility of geothermal heating on Barnard b,” Dr. Guinan explains. “Even though it’s cold and has a frozen surface, similar geothermal activity could create lakes underneath the ice, where you could have subterranean life like we do.”

Dr. Guinan is currently working with Dr. Engle and Dr. Ribas on a follow-up paper that will be published later this year, with help from Villanova Undergraduate Research Fellows Zachary Ferguson ’20 CLAS and Kasey Purcell ’20 CLAS.

DEVELOPING A NEW CAMERA FOR NASA

Villanovans are reaching for the stars—and taking pictures of them. Physics professor David Chuss, PhD, ’95 CLAS, who previously worked as an astrophysicist with the NASA Goddard Space Flight Center for 11 years, and undergraduate collaborator Joseph Michiels ’19 CLAS helped develop a camera for NASA’s Stratospheric Observatory for Infrared Astronomy (SOFIA).

They worked with NASA’s Jet Propulsion Laboratory team to develop the High-resolution Airborne Wideband Camera-plus (HiWise), which unveils the magnetic fields that can affect star formation. The Villanova team, which also includes Jadyn Anczarski ’20 CLAS, has led the analysis of some of the first results from HiWise.

FIRST GLIMPSE OF BLACK HOLE

Imagine a telescope the size of Earth—that’s essentially what it took to piece together the very first picture of a black hole. “This is an extraordinary scientific feat accomplished by a team of more than 200 researchers,” says the Event Horizon Telescope project director Sheperd S. Doeleman of the Harvard-Smithsonian Center for Astrophysics.

Two of those researchers, Villanova Physics assistant professor Joey Neilson, PhD, and Physics major Javad Siah ’20 CLAS, contributed their analysis of X-ray observations on behalf of the EHT’s Multiwavelength Working Group. “X-ray observations help connect the data between high-energy emission and the behavior of matter near the event horizon,” Dr. Neilson says. “It’s incredible to be a part of this project.”

Villanova Magazine SUMMER 2019
Navigating the Road Trip of Life

More than 2,500 graduates and 15,000 guests celebrated two days of pomp and circumstance in May for the Class of 2019 Commencement. New this year was a separate Graduate Commencement ceremony to celebrate the unique Villanova experiences and accomplishments of those earning graduate and doctoral degrees, in addition to the traditional ceremonies for undergraduate and Law students.

During the undergraduate Commencement ceremony, Life Is Good co-founder and honorary degree recipient Bert Jacobs ‘87 CLAS addressed the Class of 2019, punctuated by a few tosses of signed frisbees into the eager audience seated on the Villanova Stadium field.

After returning home to Boston from a long and laborious road trip 25 years ago, Jacobs and his brother, John, founded their positive lifestyle brand, which is now worth $100 million and donates at least 10 percent of its annual net profits to the Life is Good Kids Foundation. Fittingly, in his speech, the Life Is Good “Chief Executive Optimist” shared tips for the road trip of life.

1. Turn on the Lights

“Ralph Waldo Emerson said, ‘To the illuminated mind, the whole world burns and sparkles with light.’ When you wake up in the morning, make the decision to be an optimist. Focus on the good things in your life and the good things around you.”

2. Trust Your Navigation System

“Oh, you can choose what your value system is ... Work for an organization that is bettering the world. Find your way with your navigation system—know what it is, know who you are, and act like it.”

3. Enjoy the Ride

“When we are young, everyone tells us we need more—more stuff, more money, more education, more clothes, more and more and more. But as we get older, we all come to realize that the only thing we need more of is time: time to do the things you love, and time to be with the people you love. ... Protect your time with your life because, ladies and gentlemen, it is your life.”

Three tips from Life Is Good Chief Executive Optimist:
True Grit
What motivated this College of Professional Studies grad and Grit Award winner to persevere and achieve her goals?

“...I set a goal for myself and once I did, it was full speed ahead.”

Wanda Edmonson ‘19 CPS

You may encounter many defeats, but you must not be defeated. In fact, it may be necessary to encounter the defeat, so you can know who you are, what you can rise from, how you can still come out of it.”

Wanda Edmonson ‘19 CPS

During the third annual multidisciplinary Mendel Symposium in March, attendees were introduced to the hybridization research and 19th-century Augustinian Mendel.

On Mendel and GMOs

Villanova hosted its third annual multidisciplinary Mendel Symposium in March, assembling international experts in food security, genetic engineering and plant diversity to engage conversations between 19th-century Pope Pius XI, Gregor Mendel, in-plant hybridization research and today’s food supply challenges.

Symposium attendees were called to consider how these issues raise philosophical, ethical, security and economic questions related to stewardship of the Earth’s resources.

Educating the next generation of nurses

The epic proportion of the opioid problem in the US puts every health care provider on the frontline. And yet, most nursing and medical students here had only limited education on substance use disorder.

“Given that this is such an epidemic in health care and at the forefront of patient care, I realized that more time was needed for everyone,” Dr. McKeever says.

The course also includes some important overlap from theory into clinical practice. Students participating in certain clinical groups during their health promotion or community health experience visits, such as in recovery centers, where they teach health promotion, in these rotations, students work with health care staff to develop education classes or programs on topics related to what patients need to do now that they’re in recovery.

“I hope that is what they encounter individuals with substance use disorder, that they have a better understanding and are better equipped to communicate and support these individuals and their families.”

Did You Know?

Villanova’s College of Professional Studies has offered an Alcohol and Drug Counseling certification program since 2001. In 2015, 15 students successfully completed the Recovery Specialist and Alcohol and Drug Counselor certificate program.

Did You Know?

“...They’re a little older now and have graduated, but they got to witness Angelou as a mantra throughout her time earning a degree in Villanova’s College of Professional Studies. “It helped me focus on remaining persistent and never giving up in spite of any obstacles, challenging classes or assignments,” Edmonson says.

It didn’t go unnoticed. At the fourth annual CPS Awards Dinner, Dean Christine Kelleher Palus, PhD, presented Edmonson with the Grit Award—an honor that celebrates a student who has demonstrated exceptional passion, courage, persistence, commitment and strength of character during their academic studies at Villanova.

“Wanda is a passionate, energetic woman who will not let anything get in the way of accomplishing her goals,” Dean Palus said in her remarks. “Her drive and ambition never diminished, but have only strengthened over the years, as she delved deeper and deeper into her studies.”

A network coordinator at Verizon, Edmonson works on 4G and 5G networks, collaborating with engineers and a number of other departments to keep cell towers up and running. It’s a very technical role, and for years, she wanted to go back to school to get a technical degree.

“When I was finally ready,” Edmonson says, “I set a goal for myself and once I did, it was full speed ahead. I knew I had to rise to the occasion and do it.” Her goal was to complete a Bachelor of Interdisciplinary Studies in Media and Technology in five years—and she did, obtaining a minor in Leadership Studies along the way. “There was no taking breaks for me. I had to be 100 percent committed, loyal to my goals and tough,” Edmonson says.

When she enrolled at Villanova, she still had two children at home. “They’re a little older now and have graduated, but they got to witness me studying and doing papers and assignments,” she says. “It was an avenue for me to talk to them about education, to set a good example.”

Diary of a graduate student

The number of opioid overdose deaths in the United States—the National Institute on Drug Abuse estimates that more than 100,000 Americans die every day from opioid overdoses. While drug-related deaths have increased dramatically in all age groups, the greatest per-cent-age increase has been among adults ages 55 to 64, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

The epic proportion of the opioid problem in the US puts every health care provider on the frontline. And yet, most nursing and medical students here had only limited education on substance use disorder.

“One guest speaker is a parent who talks about their child’s trajectory from the onset of opioid abuse and full addiction, up to the time of death. ‘It’s a very informative and empowering discussion for everyone,’ Dr. McKeever says.

The course also includes some important overlap from theory into clinical practice. Students participating in certain clinical groups during their health promotion or community health experience visits, such as in recovery centers, where they teach health promotion, in these rotations, students work with health care staff to develop education classes or programs on topics related to what patients need to do now that they’re in recovery.

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or the second year in a row, Villanova led all Division I schools in the nation with the highest percentage of teams earning NCAA Public Recognition Awards for academic achievement. A total of 17 teams—77 percent of Villanova’s teams—received multiyear Academic Progress Rate scores that ranked in the top 10 percent of their sport nationwide. APR measures student-athlete performance in the classroom by assigning points each semester for academic standing and retention.

Student-athletes also achieved a new Villanova Athletics record with their spring semester performance. Spring marked the 32nd straight semester in which the overall GPA was above 3.0, and the ninth consecutive semester with a 3.2 or higher.

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An Inside Perspective

Why a recent JD/MBA alum created a reading group for inmates and Villanova Law students

S
pending time inside a correctional facility as an undergrad led Anna Boyd ‘16 CLAS, ’19 JD/MBA to Villanova Law. Her experience as a volunteer literacy and GED tutor in the Villanova Graterford Prison Program (now the Villanova Program at SCI Phoenix) sparked a passion for criminal justice reform. Once enrolled in the Charles Widger School of Law, Boyd wanted to ensure her classmates had the same opportunity. “How can you be a prosecutor or public defender and never set foot in prison prior to practice?” she says.

With support from the Office of Service Learning and Villanova Law, Boyd and a group of her classmates began leading reading groups for inmates once a week at the State Correctional Institution at Chester, an all-male, medium-security prison outside of Philadelphia. The program is the first of its kind at Villanova Law. The inmates studied student-selected readings on the criminal justice system, and about 10 to 15 men came each week prepared to participate in active and vigorous dialogue. “These men are incredibly informed,” Boyd says. “Many of them have been incarcerated for a decade or more, and a lot of their legal education comes from advocating for themselves.”

Villanova’s student-run Criminal Law Society has plans for this academic year to continue working with the SCI Chester reading group.

Did You Know?

Established in 1972, the Villanova Program at SCI Phoenix—formerly the Graterford Program—is one of the oldest continuously running degree-granting prison education programs in the US.

“Our mission is basically to get people outside,” says club President Lauren Holmes ‘20 CLAS. “People work so hard during the week that they need a chance to relax. We always say that with each mile we cover on a hike, a little more stress melts away.”

The VOC executive board—a group of about 24 students—is always on the lookout for new trip ideas. They’ve organized paintball battles, night hikes and rock climbing. This past year, they added a bike tour through Philadelphia and an archery outing in Marsh Creek State Park. At least one member of the executive board goes on each trip to serve as a guide and a host of sorts, encouraging conversation among old and new members.

For club Vice President Jenna Kolano ‘21 CLAS, the sense of community she has found in VOC is its biggest asset: “Something about being in nature often brings out a lot of honest conversation, whether we are on the trails joking around, bonding over similar struggles or celebrations, or having more in-depth discussions.”
There’s always a lot of anticipation surrounding move-in day. In August, the excitement reached a new level as Villanova was able to welcome more of its students to live on campus than ever before. About 20 percent of the University’s 5,400 resident students are the first-ever residents of Arch Hall, Trinity Hall, Canon Hall, Chapter Hall, Cupola Hall and Friar Hall, the six buildings that make up the newly opened Commons residence complex.

Making a Residence Hall a Home

The Commons by the Numbers

- 6 buildings
- 425,000 square feet
- 2,471 windows
- 7 rain gardens
- 1,135 beds
When Opportunity & Promise Meet

The O’Toole Family Presidential Scholarship delivers on its promise

BY COLLEEN DONELLY
mid the camera flashes, hugs and cheers on Commencement day, Polly and Terry O’Toole VSB ’80 beamed with pride at their two graduates. Alex Alberti ’19 COE and Mafatta Janeh ’19 CLAS aren’t their children, but they are undoubtedly part of the O’Toole legacy at Villanova.

In 2013, the couple committed to a $10 million gift to establish the endowed O’Toole Family Presidential Scholarship—Alex and Mafatta were the first recipients. “This day is a dream come true for us. We couldn’t be prouder to have you be the first O’Toole Scholars to graduate from Villanova,” Terry O’Toole told the graduates as they shared brunch together. “Hopefully you’re the first of 100 to come through this program.”

This unique promise scholarship model—the first of its kind at Villanova—gives two high-potential, high-achieving high school sophomores from the Archdiocese of Newark, N.J., the opportunity to attend Villanova with all expenses paid for four years.

“When opportunity and promise meet, a spark is created,” explains J. Leon Washington, Villanova’s dean of Enrollment Management. “The vision was to look for young persons who had promise but who may not have encountered this type of opportunity.” That vision belonged to Washington’s predecessor, the late Stephen Merritt ’78 CLAS, who came up with the idea when the O’Tooles approached him with their desire to do something different and distinctive.

“At the end of my freshman year, he didn’t get to see it come to fruition,” Alex says. “But he helped get it started, which I am really thankful for because a scholarship like this is immeasurable. This moment has been seven years in the making, and it feels like only yesterday I was interviewing for it.”

IDENTIFYING THE SPARK
Just two weeks after Alex and Mafatta became the first O’Toole Scholar alumni, six finalists began the same interview process to follow in their footsteps. The O’Tooles aren’t involved in the actual selection of the students who receive the scholarship—and that’s the way they designed it. “It’s a completely University-run program,” Polly O’Toole says. “A selection committee interviews the students, and they make the hard choices about who will receive the scholarships.”

With so many factors and promising candidates to consider, Villanova established the multidisciplinary committee to represent several academic and co-curricular departments critical in supporting the recipients throughout their transition to and arrival at Villanova:

• University Admission: Director Michael Gaynor
• University Career Center: Executive Director Kevin Grubb, assistant vice provost of Professional Development
• University Enrollment Management: Dean Leon Washington and Vice Dean Cathie Connor
• Alumni Development and Inclusion: Associate Vice Provost Teresa Nance, PhD, chief diversity officer
• O’Toole Selection Committee: J. Leon Washington, PhD, chief diversity officer, and Anne Quinn Welsh

“Aside from the generosity of the O’Tooles, I think the team effort and composition of our selection committee is one of the major keys to the success of the scholarship,” Connor says. “We’re making sure the scholars are supported from start to finish: academically, emotionally, economically and socially.”

This year, the committee received 19 nomination letters from 11 high schools in the Archdiocese of Newark—a record high in the seven years they’ve been doing this. They met in early May to narrow the pool down to fewer than 10 applicants, looking at the principal’s nomination letter, PSAT scores, report cards, rigorous courses, extracurriculars and the personal essays each applicant has to write.
In Their Words

Maltha Janks ’19 CLAS
Major: Biology
"I want to combine my love for science with my desire to help underrepresented communities. The opportunity that was given to me doesn’t happen to everyone, and so to be able to use what I was given and complete what the O’Tooles wanted is so valuable to me."

Alexander Mount ’18 CLAS
Major: Civil Engineering
"In high school, I’d pass by low-income housing that looked like container boxes stacked on top of each other. I felt like it wasn’t far—even you should have the decency of growing up in a home that can’t pride you in. That gave me the idea to be an engineer—ideally to design low-income housing that doesn’t look that way."}

Anthony Penc ’20 CLAS
Major: Computer Science and Psychology
"As both a first-generation American and college student, my mother’s comfortability in Villanova was a huge factor in my decision to attend. Her sacrifices and support have gotten me where I am today and coming spring (2022), I will be the first in my family to graduate—the culmination of her American Dream."

Erika Luisita-Guaman ’20 VSB
"I had in Ecuador where I was born—I feel blessed to have this use what I was given and complete what the O’Tooles wanted so valuable to me."

Mafatta Janeh ’19 CLAS
"I want to combine my love for science with my desire to help underrepresented communities. The opportunity that was given to me doesn’t happen to everyone, and so to be able to use what I was given and complete what the O’Tooles wanted is so valuable to me."

Julia Javerski ’21 VSB
Major: Accounting
"I always want to be that person—for other O’Toole Scholars—who’s approachable, who’s visible, who’s available, who can show them the way."

Skyeline Minor ’21 CLAS
Major: Communication
"I would love to go back in the future, and I would love to go back to my high school in my hometown and provide them with the kind of opportunity that I have because a lot of them have the capacity but they just don’t have somebody to believe in them."

In addition to measurable factors like grades and test scores, many say non-cognitive skills like leadership, grit, critical thinking and perseverance weigh heavily in their decision. “These students bring huge advantages,” Dr. Smith says. “They bring a different perspective in our classes—a different set of questions, a different set of experiences, a different set of challenges that they overcome in their lives, and everyone in the class learns from that.”

JUST THE BEGINNING

The committee gets an even better sense of each finalist when they meet for an intensive full-day interview in New- ark at the Archbishop’s headquarters. While the students are interviewing, Grubb and Connor talk to the parents about Villanova and the college process in general.

“Of parents to their kids when they’re asking questions,” Connor says. “There’s one question she gets every year: ‘Someone will say, ‘Explain this again—those people are really willing to pay for two students to go to Villanova full time for four years!’” Connor says. “It’s hard to comprehend.”

The committee scanned on campus to deliberate and select the next two scholars from that group. “It’s such a diverse, broad committee that we have a good feel for whether a particular individual is likely to flourish on our campus,” Washington says. “These young women and men have developed excellent critical-thinking skills from their life experiences. And you just get that sense of, ‘Oh boy, there’s a leader here in the making.’”

At many schools, that would be the end of the process, but at Villanova, it’s just the beginning. With decades of experience in admissions, Merritt was convinced that opportunity alone doesn’t guarantee success—it needs to come with the right support.

Upon selection of the newest scholars, Villanova works with each of their respective high schools and meets with the students two to three times a year. (continued on page 26)
From Day One to Graduation Day

The transition from high school to college can be a challenging one, especially for students who are coming from a low-income background. Nicole Davis, associate director of Retention and Outreach Counseling, is there to help students make this transition smoothly.

“Teresa Nance, Ph.D., associate vice provost for Diversity and Inclusion and chief diversity officer at Villanova, says, ‘We’re taking care of the whole student, from their first encounter with Villanova to Graduation Day.’

The Terresa Nance Scholarship is a unique opportunity for students who have been accepted into Villanova University as Presidential Scholars. Nicole Davis goes to Newark twice a year to meet with students preparing for their future at the University, to seven current Villanova students and now two alumni who have completed the program.

“The goal is for this program to exist long after we’re gone,” says Terry O’Toole. “It’s a tremendous thing, it’s not just paying the bills; it’s more than that,” says Polly O’Toole, Walsh Director of the Honor’s Program. “It’s a way of high school the scholarship recipients come to Villanova’s campus in the spring with their families for a luncheon with the current O’Toole Scholars, members of the selection committee, Provost Patrick G. Maginley, PhD, and University President the Rev. Peter M. Donohue, OSA, PhD, ’75 CLAS. They tour the campus, talk about expectations and explore the resources that will be available to them.”

“Nicole takes mentorship to a different level. It’s hard to put everything she does into words because it’s all encompassing,” says Lori O’Toole.

Nicole Davis

Terry O’Toole Scholar

PHOTO: JIM McWILLIAMS

PHOTOS: PAUL CRANE

A Community of Scholars

year to get them thinking early about what they need to do to prepare for college and what they need to do to stay on track.

“What makes this scholarship unique is that you build a relationship with the donors as well as all the people involved in the scholarship selection.”

Erika Livitskova-Guaman ’20 VSB

In addition to this annual luncheon, the O’Tooles continue to meet with the scholarship recipients at events throughout the year, including Villanova’s Endowed Scholarship Dinner and the Scholarship Fund for Inner-City Children Annual Gala at the Archdiocese Center in Newark. “You’re getting to know the people who are benefiting from your gift, and as a donor that’s a tremendous thing,” Terry O’Toole says. “It doesn’t really get any better than that.”

From Villanova Magazine

PHOTO: STEVE NASH
A Driving Force

Examining Villanova’s most recent Economic and Social Impact report

BY MARIAN BUTCHER

Villanova recently engaged leading economic consulting firm Econsult Solutions Inc. to conduct an independent analysis of the University’s economic and social impact. The resulting report clearly demonstrates the University’s significant contributions to and impact on Radnor Township, Delaware County and the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania.

Villanova’s statewide economic impact is nearly $900 million, which supports 6,120 jobs in the state with more than $460 million in annual earnings. This impact comes from the University’s ongoing operations, including the purchase of goods and services and the employment of more than 2,700 faculty and staff; its capital investments, which have averaged $120 million annually over the past five years; and the ancillary spending of students and visitors on food, lodging, shopping and entertainment locally and regionally.

In Delaware County, Villanova’s impact totals $326 million, and in Radnor Township, home to the University for its entire 177-year history, the University’s impact is $62 million. Villanova is the township’s largest employer and one of its most significant economic engines, paying taxes and fees of approximately $11 million to the township over the past six years.

“Villanova’s operations, along with spending by students, their parents, alumni and visitors, has a tremendous positive financial impact on the community,” says Executive Vice President Kenneth G. Valosky ’82 VSB.

Villanova’s connections to the local business community are especially strong. The University is a driving force for Main Line businesses and has partnered with business and civic associations for programs like Villanova Dines Out Restaurant Week, which encouraged students and neighbors to dine-out locally and the inaugural Main Line Small Business Panel and Networking Event for small-business owners, which Villanova co-hosted.

“With time and time again from business owners that proximity to the Villanova is an asset to them and the community as a whole,” says Chris Todd, owner of Christopher’s restaurant in Wayne and president of the Wayne Business Association.

The University’s mission, rooted in its Augustinian Catholic values, calls students, faculty, staff and alumni to ignite change around the world, and that commitment begins close to home. Each year, for example, more than 5,000 Villanova volunteers give back at more than 100 sites throughout Greater Philadelphia, including more than 30 around the Main Line, during the St. Thomas of Villanova Day of Service.

“We at Villanova believe strongly in being a good neighbor — lending a hand to meet needs in the community, providing access to our academic and recreation facilities, and inviting our neighbors to athletic, arts and cultural events,” says Chris Kovoliski ’96 CLAS, assistant vice president for Government Relations and External Affairs. “That outreach is a critical part of our mission.”
As a graduate student at Rutgers University, Shannen Dee Williams came across an image of four black nuns in a 1968 Pittsburgh Courier article announcing the formation of the National Black Sisters’ Conference in Pittsburgh. She was in search of a topic for a short seminar paper. What she found was a story that sparked an excitement and curiosity that would drive the focus of her research for years to come.

“After that moment, I knew I wanted to know as much as possible about this organization and the women who founded it,” says Dr. Williams, who now holds the Albert R. Lepage Endowed Assistant Professorship in History at Villanova.

That was 2007. Before then, the only black nun Dr. Williams had ever seen was Whoopi Goldberg’s Sister Mary Clarence in the *Sister Act* movie franchise. “I had so many questions,” she says. “Of course I wondered, ‘How was it possible that I, a cradle Catholic, the daughter of the first black woman to graduate from the University of Notre Dame, had no idea that black nuns existed?’”

Despite the invisibility of black sisters in the annals of Catholic history, Dr. Williams discovered a rich tradition of black women participating in religious leadership as early as the first century.

“The story of the real ‘Sister Act’ (in the United States) is how generations of African American women and girls fought against racial segregation and exclusion to answer God’s call in their lives and minister as women religious, as sisters,” she says.

A PIONEER IN PHILADELPHIA’S RELIGIOUS COMMUNITY

At Commencement this past May, Dr. Williams proudly introduced one of those trailblazing African American women religious to receive an honorary doctoral degree from Villanova.

“Father President, for her leadership in breaking down racial barriers in our Church and in honor of all of the lives that she has touched and inspired over the years as a pioneering sister, teacher, campus minister, pastoral coordinator and all-around freedom fighter, it is with tremendous joy and the greatest honor that I present to you for the degree of Doctor of Humane Letters, Honoris Causa, Sister Cora Marie Billings ’67 CLAS.”

It was a full-circle moment for Dr. Williams—Sister Cora Marie was one of the sisters who established the National Black Sisters’ Conference in 1968 and inspired her research for the past 12 years. Sister Cora Marie was one of several Sisters of Mercy at that conference.

In 1956, Sister Cora Marie had desegregated the Mercy Community in Merion, Pa., and began blazing a path of being the “first” or the “only” in many settings over her six-decade career as a Catholic nun. She is one of many pioneering African American women religious Villanova counts among its alumnae.

Early in the 20th century, new state laws began requiring parochial school educators to obtain formal certifications and college degrees to teach. This presented an additional challenge for the nation’s black teaching sisterhoods, which had been established in response to the exclusionary admissions policies of other religious orders. Most Catholic institutions of higher education at the time did not admit African Americans, whether they were Catholic or not.

Villanova was one of the first Catholic institutions of higher education to open its doors to black women

America’s Real Sister Act

Villanova History professor uncovers the rich history and untold stories of black nuns in the American Catholic Church

BY QUEEN MUSE

America’s Real Sister Act

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BY QUEEN MUSE
religious, most notably the Oblate Sisters of Providence, headquartered in Baltimore, Md., after World War I.

Sister Cora Marie hails from a family of devout African American Catholics who fought against racist barriers to participate in the Catholic faith and wider American life. Her pioneering great-great-grandparents had labored as slaves under Catholic auspices in Washington, D.C. Amid much opposition, Billings’ grandfather, John Aloysius Lee Sr., became the first African American person allowed to play in Philadelphia’s Catholic high school basketball league in 1902. The city later built the John A. Lee Recreation Center to honor his legacy of fighting for black inclusion in local athletics. His daughters, Susan Grace Lee and Bertha Amelia Theresa Lee, however, were denied admission into religious life in Philadelphia in the 1940s because of the color of their skin.

It’s a dichotomy Sister Cora Marie still faces: knowing the undeniable barriers faced by her aunts, who ultimately became Oblate Sisters of Providence, and being the one who ultimately knocked those same barriers down. “I realize that, to get to where I am, I’m standing on the shoulders of ancestors,” she says.

Dr. Shannen Dee Williams presented Sister Cora Marie with an honorary doctoral degree at Commencement in May.

PHOTOS: SISTER CORA MARIE BILLINGS, RSM
Villanova Magazine SUMMER 2019

“It knew in order to change the Church, I had to remain within the system and look for the strategies and people who were going to help me change it.”

Sister Cora Marie Billings, RSM, ’67 CLAS

PHOTO: JOHN SHETRON

“Her story and the story of her family’s extraordinary journey from slavery to freedom in the Catholic Church typify what many scholars call the uncommon faithfulness of the black Catholic community,” Dr. Williams says. “It mirrors that of so many sisters who understood that segregation and racism have no place in the universal Church and fought to make the Church live up to its Catholic ideals.”

“Kicking off Villanova’s 2019 Black History Month celebration earlier this year, Sister Cora Marie shared these thoughts and experiences during a fireside chat with Dr. Williams in the St. Thomas of Villanova Chapel. Ultimately, Sister Cora Marie says the experiences of her ancestors fueled her determination to become a part of the Church and work to ensure the same opportunity for other black sisters in the faith. “I have never seen a system changed by somebody from the outside,” she says. “I knew in order to change the Church, I had to remain within the system and look for the strategies and people who were willing to help me change it.”

Over the past 63 years, she’s done just that. In the 1960s, she became the first African American person to teach at an all-white grade school in Levittown, Pa., and the first African American sister to teach in a Catholic high school in Philadelphia. She went on to become the first African American sister to work as a campus minister at Virginia State University, and then became the first African American nun to lead a Catholic parish, serving as the Pastoral Coordinator for St. Elizabeth Parish in North Richmond, Va., for 14 years. She also led the Diocese of Richmond’s Office for Black Catholics for 25 years and was director of the Human Rights Council for the state of Virginia from 2007 to 2010.

“My story and the story of my family’s extraordinary journey from slavery to freedom in the Catholic Church typify what many scholars call the uncommon faithfulness of the black Catholic community,” Dr. Williams says. “It mirrors that of so many sisters who understood that segregation and racism have no place in the universal Church and fought to make the Church live up to its Catholic ideals.”

Dr. Williams has spent the past 12 years conducting extensive research on the lives and labors of these sisters, including more than 100 interviews with former and current black and white nuns. She’s poured all of these newly uncovered truths about the roles of black sisters in American Catholic history into the manuscript for her first book, *Subversive Habits: The Untold Story of Black Catholic Nuns in the United States*. Dr. Williams’ research suggests black sisters were not omitted from American Catholic history by accident. Many black women and girls who had been educated by white
nuns were later denied admission into the religious communities of their educators on the basis of race alone. Rare exceptions were made for black women and girls with light skin prior to World War II. Still, others who did desegregate, or even help to establish, white congregations were often later excluded from the histories of those communities.

Dr. Williams’ work is especially timely now, not only because of its historical originality but also because of the changing demographics in the Catholic Church, which is projected to experience its greatest growth in Africa, Asia and Latin America over the next three decades. “It’s particularly important that we understand who makes up the Church and recognize the contributions of those who made the Church what it is today,” she says.

Her book will provide the first full historical examination of black Catholic sisters in the United States, and it will be a transformative work for anyone who reads it, according to Maghan Keita, PhD, director of the Africana Studies Program and professor of History at Villanova.

“It’s going to be an eye-opener. It’s definitely going to prompt a lot of conversation,” he says. “Dr. Williams’ efforts to highlight the contemporary notions of people of African descent, and particularly African American women in the Catholic Church, invites us to go back and take a closer look at the history of the Catholic Church in ways that we never have before.”

“I keep the images and prayer cards of black sisters close because their tradition of great and steady faithfulness inspires me.”

Dr. Shannen Dee Williams

This summer, specialists installed a new stained glass window in Villanova’s Corr Chapel depicting Servant of God Sister Thea Bowman. The Rev. Richard Cannulli, OSA, MFA, ’73 CLAS, professor of Studio Art, designed the window highlighting the Franciscan nun and one of the first black Catholics who are being considered for canonization.

Sister Thea changed the fabric of the American Catholic Church in the late 20th century, but her story is not well known, says Shannen Dee Williams, PhD, assistant professor of History. The granddaughter of slaves and the only African American member of the Franciscan Sisters of Perpetual Adoration in the Diocese of La Crosse in Wisconsin, Sister Thea was known for her powerful preaching and singing at Church gatherings across the country. Though the four-stage process for sainthood can take decades or even centuries, Dr. Williams believes the causes of Sister Thea and other black Catholics further encourage the Church to embrace African Americans as part of the American Catholic experience.

“Once they never become saints, the fact that their causes have been formally opened means we’ll have an opportunity to tell their stories in a host of new ways, ” Dr. Williams says. A preeminent scholar, Dr. Williams has traveled across the country speaking about the history of black Catholic sisters to religious communities and assemblies, including the Leadership Conference of Women Religious assembly in Atlanta (pictured here).

Corr Chapel Envisions Sister Thea Bowman in a New Light

PHOTO: MICHAEL ALEXANDER / GEORGIA BULLETIN

PHOTO: VILLANOVA UNIVERSITY
Villanova Engineering professor works with a team of scientists to outsmart traumatic brain injury with new “smart brain” technology

BY VALERIE NEFF NEWITT
A scientific milestone rests on the workshop in Villanova’s Cellular Biomechanics and Sports Science Laboratory in White Hall—a highly instrumented, first-of-its-kind “smart brain.” Separated from its transparent skull by a thin layer of fluid, the deeply creviced pink gel mold mimics the physiological makeup of the human brain. Though it stops short of actually thinking, the smart brain holds important implications for research, diagnosis, treatment and prevention of traumatic brain injury (TBI). Inventor Qianhong Wu, PhD, director of the laboratory and associate professor of Mechanical Engineering, and his collaborators received a patent for this new technology in December 2018.

With it, they hope to advance fundamental understanding of how the human brain works and provide unprecedented access to its inner workings. Dr. Wu compares the technology to the black box recorder on an airplane: “When a plane goes down, officials know there has been an accident—but why it happened is discovered only when the black box is recovered,” he says. “Similarly, the smart brain can give us a better understanding of why a brain injury occurred.”

Equipped with high-speed cameras, accelerometers, and displacement and pressure sensors, the smart brain can record hard data pertaining to various types of impact, the actions they prompt and the injuries they cause in the brain. “Prevailing technology looks at the skull and brain as a whole, but we were determined to solve that ‘between the lines’ mystery that has eluded foundational studies,” Dr. Wu explains. “We’ve always known impact causes damage, but we’d never seen the mechanism that lies between the two.” He says it was precisely this “between the lines” mystery that has eluded foundational science pertaining to TBI until now.

MAKING THE SMART BRAIN

Finding the right materials for the model was the biggest challenge, according to Ji Lang, a doctoral candidate in Mechanical Engineering who’s been working with Dr. Wu since 2016. “The two collaborated to build the technology with a multidisciplinary team of scientists who have expertise in fluid mechanics, materials, instrumentation and manufacturing.” They experimented with many different materials and made many brains. Finally, the smart brain took form—with design input from Kei-Peng Jen, PhD, a retired Villanova associate professor; Chris Townend, laboratory manager for the Department of Mechanical Engineering; and Rungun Nathan, PhD, associate professor and chair of Engineering at Penn State Berks, who previously taught at Villanova.

The team incorporated 3D printing to form a shape from which to cast a brain mold. Using CT scans for reference, they settled on hydrogel as the material of choice for the brain because it best captures the soft, squishy nature of the anatomical matter in terms of elasticity and density. In crafting the shape of the skull, the CT scans again proved useful. “The skull alone required two months to develop the correct shape and transparency,” Ji says. “After all, we couldn’t just go out and buy one. We had to develop the machinery to make it.”

From Lab Research to Clinical Findings

According to the Brain Injury Association, a brain injury occurs in the U.S. every nine seconds, and at least 2.5 million people sustain a TBI every year. One of every 60 Americans lives with a TBI-related disability, ranging from sight, hearing and/or memory loss, to depression and cognitive impairments. “Until now there has been no proactive way to determine how those TBIs occur,” Dr. Wu says. “Most work has been computational, lacking experimental verification. There has been no real-life way to validate computational findings.” That’s exactly what he and Jennifer are hoping to do in their work with Jefferson Biomechanics and Sports Science Laboratory. Director of the Mechanical Engineering graduate programs, Dr. Wu now his students as collaborators rather than simply trainees.

“We work toward a meeting of the minds, and invite each other to come up with our best ideas,” Dr. Wu says. “I don’t say, ‘This is my idea, now do it.’ I want students to be motivated to pursue critical thinking.”

Another of Dr. Wu’s PhD students, Jennifer Muller, also plays an important role in the smart brain project—in the clinic rather than the lab. She is working with clinicians and researchers at Thomas Jefferson University Hospital in Philadelphia to validate the model’s findings and demonstrate the utility of the work in TBI treatment.

If approved, the technology could provide critical data and validate the model’s findings.

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Ji Lang, PhD candidate

A Way into the Brain

“Concussion Conundrum” explored key issues among patients, teams, lawyers and surgeons regarding head and brain injuries.

Coincidentally, about that time, Dr. Wu took his car to be serviced and began talking to a station employee who had played football for years. “He was very obviously having cognitive difficulties and was confused. He told me he hadn’t realized how important protective headgear was, and he had no idea how much concussions he’d suffered,” Dr. Wu says. “I realized right then that this happens to a lot of people, and as a scientist and engineer, I could do something to help with this issue.”

That desire to make a difference eventually morphed into the smart brain, for which he holds a patent. “I wanted students to be motivated to pursue critical thinking.”

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FROM LAB RESEARCH TO CLINICAL FINDINGS

Dr. Wu and his team applied for a second patent in January 2019, which, if approved, will take his work on TBI much deeper. “We have come too far to stop now.” Dr. Wu says. “After all, we couldn’t just go out and buy one. We had to develop the machinery to make it.”

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We can look inside the brains of people with head injuries and determine how their brains’ structures and functions are affected, and Dr. Wu’s modeling helps us to understand that.

The ability to pinpoint the exact cause and precise position of brain injury will be the climax of this trailblazing translation. Such a specific focus eventually may allow treating physicians to use more targeted imaging, yielding more specific and personalized information. “Medicine in general is subjective and qualitative; it is not an exact science. But here we are trying to make it quantitative and develop quantitative biomarkers for the status of the brain,” Dr. Mohamed says.

Dr. Wu hopes to provide doctors with a guideline for the diagnosis and treatment of concussive and subconcussive injury, and to inform the design of different types of protective helmets, not just for athletes, but also for construction workers, military personnel, and bike and motorcycle riders. “Caring is at the very heart of Villanova,” he says. “We are doing something meaningful here that will help improve the lives of many people. That is something of which I am truly proud.”
Hailing from Keller, Texas, freshman high jumper Sanaä Barnes became the first Villanova woman to be an All-American in a field event with a fourth-place finish in the high jump at the NCAA Indoor Championships in March and a sixth-place finish at the NCAA Outdoor Championships in June. She broke the Villanova record in the high jump for the second time this season when she cleared the bar at a height of 1.84 meters at the indoor championships.
The leader of the largest nurse-managed health care network in the country is a Villanova nurse. Donna Torrisi ’72 FCMN, MSN, CRNP, FALA, is retiring this year after nearly 30 years as director of the Family Practice & Counseling Network, which serves 24,000 patients each year in five locations around Philadelphia, mostly in underserved neighborhoods. A nationally recognized leader in the field of nurse practitioners, Torrisi was instrumental in changing Pennsylvania law to allow nurse practitioners to prescribe medications and be recognized as primary care practitioners.

John G. Shuttuck ’81 CLAS was recently promoted to chief of Web Reporting and Data Analytics with the administrative offices of the courts in Trenton, N.J.

Natalie D. Ramsey ’94 CLAS joined Robinson+Cole as a partner. She has practiced in the areas of bankruptcy and corporate reorganizations for more than three decades.

Robert A. Bezzone ’90 VSB, a senior financial advisor at Merrill Lynch in Philadelphia, Pa., has been recognized on the 2019 ‘Best-In-State Wealth Advisor’ list.

Susan Corcoran ’91 CLAS has been named senior vice president, director of Publicity, Partnerships, Civic Engagement, and Public Education at the Philadelphia Museum of Art. She is the current president of the Villanova University Alumni Association.

Nancy Lane ’97 CLAS, president of the Local Media Association, has received Merril Associates’ 2019 Award of Merit for outstanding leadership and innovation in local media. She transformed and rebranded the organization from a newspaper-only association to an archive, innovation-focused entity.

Kathleen Barnett Einhorn, Esq., ’80 CLAS, a partner at vosler & Associates in Newark, N.J., was recently profiled by the New Jersey Super Lawyer 2019 edition in the article, “It’s Handled: Got a Billion Dollar Problem?” Ginni Kathleen Barnett Einhorn in Week.” The article dives into her career highlights and at role Genovs Burns and as a mentor to be female associates.

Chris Terec ’98 CLAS joined Caldey and assumed the role of vice president, Arizona. Caldey is a member of the Gesner Group, manufactures tabletop refractory materials, brick and pellet shapes.

Johanna Donaule-Connelly ’89 CLAS is an elected member of the Falls Church, Va., City Council. One of seven council members, she also serves as vice mayor. She focuses on community building through public education, community partnerships, civic engagement and regional cooperation.

Jack Kolmendarger ’89 VSB, CMA of Herbst & Company Inc., a leading accounting firm headquartered in Reading, Pa., was recently induced into the Association for Accounting Marketing Hall of Fame.

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with his own firm, the McGowan Law Office LLC.

1992
Daniel Sforza ’92 CLAS was named executive editor of The Bergen Record in New Jersey and The Journal News in New York, as well as NorthJersey.com and LoHud.com. Sforza was the editor of a Pulitzer Prize-diiselent project on the heroin epidemic and was the lead editor on the Bridgegate scandal coverage.

1996
April Barton ’96 CWSL has been named dean of the Duquesne University School of Law. She spent more than 20 years as a professor and administrator at the Villanova University Charles Widger School of Law, most recently as the associate dean for Academic Affairs. At Villanova Law, Barton launched leadership development initiatives for students and taught courses in administrative rulemaking and leadership skills for lawyers, computer law, the First Amendment and regulation in cyberspace and digital law.

1997
Benjamin V. Sanchez, Esq., ’97 VSB and his wife, Karen, welcomed their third child, Ben Jr., in August 2018. In November 2018, Sanchez was elected to the Pennsylvania House of Representatives for the 153rd Legislative District for a two-year term.

1998
Anisha S. Abraham, JD, MA, ’98 CLAS has joined the Philadelphia office of Rawle & Henderson LLP as of counsel to the firm. Abraham concentrates her law practice in the areas of environmental, mass and toxic torts.

Fred Santarpia, MS, ’98 VSB has been named US Chief Digital Officer of the Year by the Chief Digital Officer Club, the world’s largest organization of c-suite digital and data leaders.

Villanovans from all classes—especially those ending in 4 and 9 celebrating their milestones—gathered together at Reunion Weekend. University President the Rev. Peter M. Donohue, OSA, PhD, ’75 CLAS provided his vision for Villanova during the President’s Lecture, and other celebrations included class meetups, a Mass for married couples, a family-friendly outdoor festival and Supernova—Villanova’s annual Reunion dinner dance. The Class of 1969 was honored at the Halley Century Dinner, where Nance Nikolaidi, PhD, ’69 COE (pictured above, center), a former University Trustee and the retired president and CEO of Honeywell Specialty Materials, received the St. Thomas of Villanova Alumni Medal, the Villanova University Alumni Association’s highest honor.
The impact of the work of Operation Progress, led by Executive Director Theresa Garland ’03 CLAS in the subject of a Netflix documentary, A Week in Warts. Garland has worked in education and youth programs in the Watts neighborhood of Los Angeles, Calif., for 16 years and has spent the last six years with Operation Progress, which works with youth in the community to build leadership skills, provide educational opportunities and build support systems through mentorship with Los Angeles Police Department officers and community involvement.

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50

Sharon Pullich '56 FCN has taken a position on a medical education and sports medicine faculty at New York Presbyterian Hospital/Weill Cornell Medical Center.

Robert Hunter '50 accepted an executive leadership role as the Human Resources director for Bon Marhotel Auto Family in Cuyahoga Falls, Ohio. His team supports more than 400 employers and provides employee relations guidance to senior leaders throughout the organization.

Miriam Neidhalm '50 MD was promoted to director of practice at Baker Nikey Noyce proton office. She is responsible for high-net-worth individuals and family groups.

Nicholas Schaefer '58 FCN accepted a position at Hershey (Pa.) Medicine as one of the new neuro-intensive care unit teams.

Nicholas Testa '18 VSB joined the American Assembly of America as one of the newest South New Jersey Male co-chairs, along with his sister Samantha.

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Class Notes

In Memoriam

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Maurice A. Crane, PhD, '50 CLAS, June 1, 2014.

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James L. Nolan, Jr., '60 CLAS, Dec. 10.

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Sandra DiCarlo, professor, '80 CLAS, March 16.

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In May, more than 2,500 Villanova graduates walked across the stage and into the next chapter of their lives. Over two days, more than 15,000 guests arrived on campus to celebrate our graduates at three Commencement ceremonies, three masses, five undergraduate convocations and one Naval ROTC commissioning ceremony.

PHOTOS BY Pete Brown, Paul Crane, James Judy, Maria Mueller, John Shetron and Marissa Reinhart

Each issue, Villanova Magazine will give readers a glimpse of a culminating project for a Villanova student or group of students. In these experiences, students get to apply what they know, pursue what they love and present what they discover.

Rethinking Recycling

MBA students help a recycling innovator unveil a new zero-waste packaging platform to the world.

THE CLIENT

A global leader in collecting and repurposing hard-to-recycle waste, Trenton, N.J.-based TerraCycle Inc. launched Loop, a new project to take their mission one step further. The program aims to eliminate waste by creating durable, refillable packaging for common grocery, household and personal care goods. After using the products, customers return the empty containers to Loop to be thoroughly cleaned, refilled with new product and redelivered.

THE NEED

Consumer packaged goods companies that partner with Loop need to create or obtain packaging that meets Loop standards for cleanability, refillability, zero-waste labeling and recyclability. However, explaining these requirements to potential partners was complex and time-consuming, and Loop needed a simplified and streamlined onboarding process that would help these companies develop their own packaging or find suitable packaging vendors.

THE INNOVATORS

That’s where a team of Villanova MBA students came in. As Loop prepared for its official reveal at the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland, earlier this year, 2019 MBA grads Rebekah Hopper, Elizabeth McShane, Sejal Patel, Marissa Smatlak and Mishal Shamsi partnered with the company to help them develop a short-term solution that could be implemented quickly. Advised by Manuel Nuñez ‘03 MBA, professor of Practice, Management and Operations, and alumni adviser Stacy Hudgins ’06 EMBA, the student team completed this project for their Social Enterprise Consulting Practicum. This Villanova Business capstone course is designed to give MBA students the opportunity to develop their professional skill set with a client firm that is serving the common good within the greater Philadelphia community—reflecting Villanova’s Augustinian values while teaching students how to work at the intersection of profit and purpose.

THE BIG REVEAL

The team created an interactive digital guide to assist new partners with the onboarding process. The guide provided an overview of the Loop concept and packaging and labeling standards, as well as suggestions for design agencies, manufacturers and off-the-shelf packaging vendors.

“The team provided a fresh set of eyes and came up with a number of different ideas that were really helpful,” says Jasmin Druffner, a durable packaging developer at Loop. “Their work provided a great foundation for the guide I ultimately presented in Davos.” Now available in certain Northeast US states and Paris, Loop is in the process of expanding across the US and internationally.
Undercover Campus

Villanovans haven’t hesitated to get their hands dirty at the new on-campus research garden this year. More than 250 volunteers, numerous undergraduate and graduate classes, and researchers have gotten to work—including the garden’s first funded Villanova Undergraduate Research Fellow. Established by the Villanova Consortium for Agricultural Research and Education, the garden boasts 19 raised beds that house plentiful fruits, vegetables and herbs, as well as several research projects.