A Tireless Advocate

George Coleman ’78 VSB has never slowed down in his work for Villanova and its students

When George Coleman ’78 VSB took a summer job at age 16 at the Larchmont Shore Club in New York, he had no idea that it would be his first introduction to the power of the Villanova network.

The president of the club, Edward Riley ’43 VSB, took a liking to Coleman and suggested that he consider Villanova for college. Coleman knew little of the school, but was intrigued by Riley’s descriptions and guided by his mentorship.

Coleman would later tap into the Villanova network to launch his 30-year career in finance, to prepare Villanova students for jobs on Wall Street, and to inspire other alumni to stay engaged and involved with their alma mater.

“Villanova changed my life, so it’s very easy for me to give back,” Coleman says.

FINDING A BROTHERHOOD

Coleman sees his life as a series of milestones, and one of the most influential for him was the decision to join Delta Tau Delta fraternity soon after coming to Villanova as an Accounting major. He eventually became president of the group.

“It gave me an enormous amount of confidence, not only that the brothers had faith in me that I could do the job, but also that, in return, I could deliver,” Coleman says.

The next milestone also came courtesy of his DTD affiliation. A few years after graduation, he was working in sales but hoping to break into finance. At a dinner with fraternity brothers in New York City one night, Coleman sat next to Jim Giordano ’77 CLAS, who worked at a hedge fund and offered to make a call on Coleman’s behalf to the investment banking firm First Boston.

Coleman started in the associate training program at First Boston, which later became Credit Suisse, and worked his way up to become a managing director in the firm’s Securities division and vice chairman of the Global Equities department.

As his career bloomed, Coleman turned back to Villanova, hiring graduates for Credit Suisse jobs and also finding opportunities to help them achieve at an even higher level.

“The interview process on Wall Street is very complicated, and I was seeing that Villanova students had the academic credentials but needed more preparation in the soft skills,” Coleman says. For several years in the early 2000s, he pulled together Villanova alumni who were also top executives on Wall Street to present to students on how financial institutions operate and on best practices for successful interviews.

“It is invaluable to have alumni of George’s caliber willing to share their insights and give back in ways that significantly benefit our students.”

—Patrick G. Maggitti, PhD, Villanova’s Provost

SUPPORTING STUDENTS

Coleman is known to VSB students who attended the interviewing workshops he moderated for nearly 10 years, and he’s known to other VSB students because they’ve managed the $100,000 he gave to a student-managed fund in the endowment. Some students in the College of Nursing also know Coleman for a scholarship he established in memory of his mother, a nurse who earned a PhD in public health at the age of 63. Men’s Basketball players benefit from his support of the building of the Davis Center, his generosity to the upcoming Pavilion renovation project, and his endowment of the team’s strength and conditioning coach position.

Now retired, Coleman is even more active as a Villanova ambassador. His roles as New York regional chairman and member of the Campaign Executive Committee for the Villanova Campaign to Ignite Change keep him doing what he loves—building relationships, inspiring others to do their part and sharing his own Villanova story.

“I tell people that Villanova has not been a four-year decision. It’s been a 40-year decision. It’s a 40-year decision,” Coleman says. “Those four years have stayed with me the entire time.”

For those who have known him the longest, it comes as no surprise that Coleman is still connecting people and raising his hand for leadership roles.

“George doesn’t do anything halfway,” says Bill Donnell ’77 VSB, a classmate and DTD brother. “He goes all in or he doesn’t go in at all, and he has done that consistently since I met him in 1974.”

BY MARIAN BUTCHER
Creating Lifelong Value

By Christine Guerrini

Fourth in a five-part series on the Villanova University Alumni Association’s new platform for alumni engagement

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lumni affiliation with Villanova can yield opportunities to engage with others and play a role in students’ experiences. Louis Manon ’97, CLAS transferred to Villanova during his junior year and never lived on campus, so he felt a different connection to campus from his peers. The friends, faculty and staff he met, however, had a positive influence on his journey.

During Reunion 2016, DeVon Jackson ’00 CLAS, ’03 MA invited Manon to a happy hour for the VUA’s new Black Alumni Society. “I was glad to learn that opportunities like this existed,” says Manon. “I realized that my best contribution as an alumnus is my involvement.”

As co-chair of the affinity group, he has spoken with students to learn how the society can be a resource for them. Manon also has explored ways to bring more BAS members back to campus. “I’m proud to help create a new outlet for Villanovans to engage, no matter how long they’ve been away.”

Returning Value

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lumni also understand the importance of reinvesting in the University’s future. Across the country, Villanova University Clubs host scholarship events to raise money for students from their regions, further cultivating Villanova’s community of scholars with diverse backgrounds and perspectives.

When John J. Reilly ’89 CLAS became chair of the Scholarship Golf Outing in Charlotte, N.C., in 2012, he saw an opportunity to increase results through collaboration with other clubs. “We’re all working toward the same goal,” says Reilly. “We started to swap best practices and have learned a lot from one another.”

In 2016, 14 clubs raised more than $312,000 through scholarship programming—a nearly 25 percent increase from 2015. Certain clubs, including Charlotte and Long Island, have been so successful that they have created endowed funds to support local students in perpetuity.

“The Villanova brand keeps getting better—from academics to athletics,” Reilly says. “I think we all feel a responsibility to keep pace and support that success.”

Inspiring New Generations

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hrough their engagement and support, alumni pass on a strong sense of community spirit. Mary Yachnik ’19 VSB had heard about the benefits of being a Villanovan from her parents, Catherine ’89 VSB and Michael ’89 VSB, and her sister Denise ’17 VSB. When it came time to choose a school, Villanova was a natural fit.

“It had everything I wanted: excellent academics, faculty with real-world expertise, and strong alumni and industry relationships,” says Mary, a Marketing and Communication double major.

Mary is a member of the Student Alumni Association and Reunion Crew—initiatives sponsored by the VUA to forge bonds between students and alumni. The pride and loyalty of the Nova Network amaze her. “I have met so many alumni eager to offer advice or connect me with an internship opportunity,” she says. “With my education and the support of this community, I know I have a bright future.”

Learn how to make the most of your Villanova affiliation at alumni.villanova.edu.
The annual Volunteer Leaders Conference offers Villanova University Alumni Association volunteers from around the country the chance to engage with one another and University leadership through a day of networking, education and collaboration.

Through interactive workshop sessions and panels, attendees at the 2016 event, held Oct. 21, learned how to become more effective and strategic in their roles and how to engage and inspire future leaders.

During a lunch led by University President the Rev. Peter M. Donohue, OSA, PhD, ‘75 CLAS, outstanding leaders were recognized for their volunteer accomplishments. The following were the 2016 award recipients:

- David C. Ridenour ‘79 VSB, Goodwill Ambassador Award
- Katrina Ercole ‘86 VSB, Distinguished Service Award
- Victor J. Maggitti ‘56 VSB, Reunion Volunteer Service Award
- Matt Clark ‘11 MBA, Leadership Award
- Ronald Abbazio ‘18 VSB, Outstanding Student Volunteer Award
- Patty Esposito ‘80 CLAS, Outstanding Volunteer Award

Patty Esposito ‘80 CLAS, a dedicated supporter of the University for three decades, was presented with the 2016 Villanova University Loyalty Award at Homecoming.

Esposito serves on the Villanova University Alumni Association Board of Directors and is an active member of the Villanova University Club of North Central Jersey. She received the inaugural Reunion Volunteer Service Award for her longtime leadership on Class of 1980 Reunion committees. Esposito is also a former member of the Villanova Parent Ambassadors and is a college fair volunteer in North Jersey for the Alumni Recruitment Network.

Instituted in 1932 by the Villanova University Club of Greater Philadelphia, the Loyalty Award is one of the University’s oldest awards. The recipient is selected by the vote of previous award winners.

SCHOOL SPIRIT SOARS AT HOMECOMING

At Homecoming 2016, a crowd of Villanova fans—alumni, family and friends—visited campus to celebrate and rally together. The Homecoming Festival featured performances from student a cappella and dance groups, the Villanova Band, cheerleaders, and the Villanova mascot, Will D. Cat. families enjoyed lively music, caricature artists and giant lawn games.

In the Homecoming football game that afternoon, the Wildcats thrilled thousands in attendance, defeating Albany 24–13. Before kickoff, Villanova’s players entered the field for the first time from the team’s locker room in the new Andrew J. Talley Athletic Center. They were greeted by a throng of alumni and supporters who cheered them on to victory.

ALWAYS TRUE TO VILLANOVA

Patty Esposito ‘80 CLAS—with her husband, Jim ‘79 VSB, and children, Reilly ‘16 CLAS, Connor ‘10 VSB and Emily ‘13 VSB—receives the Villanova University Loyalty Award.