



## **Focus on Villanova University**

Villanova University, with its suburban campus just 12 miles outside of Philadelphia's Center City, is an attractive option for students seeking a mid-size school with a fine reputation, caring faculty, strong sense of community, some high profile sports teams, and lots of school spirit.

Villanova's 7,000 undergraduates are matriculated in five colleges: Liberal Arts being the largest with 580 spots each year, Business second with 405, followed by Sciences with 325, Nursing with 90, and Engineering with 27.

Applicants apply directly to the college where they plan to major, and for Engineering they apply for the particular type as well, opting for Mechanical, Electrical, Chemical, Civil, or Computer. Plans are in the works to add Biomedical Engineering soon too. Although the Engineering program is fairly small, it is consistently highly ranked.

In 2016 Bloomberg News ranked Villanova's School of Business the number one undergraduate business school in the nation, and its internship opportunities were ranked number three. The School of Business is more competitive to enter as a freshman than some of the other divisions, and the opportunity to transfer in later is not guaranteed although my tour guide reported that everyone he knew who wanted to was allowed to transfer in after the first year.

Founded in the Augustinian tradition of Roman Catholicism, Villanova is described as "more spiritual and values-oriented than Catholic" by its Dean of Admissions Michael Gaynor. Approximately 64% of the current student body self-identify as Catholic, but students of all religions are welcome, and consistent with its mission, the school will provide free transportation to places of worship for anyone who can't find what he or she needs on campus. Jewish students use the Hillel that also

serves nearby Haverford, Bryn Mawr and Swarthmore. Although 75% of the students are white, they say that the ideas and perspectives expressed in class are diverse.

St. Augustine envisioned living and learning in a community of friends, and Villanova's mission is guided by "five promises: academic excellence, personal attention, strong community, service to others, and a foundation for lifelong success." The unusually committed alumni are testimony to the school's success in building community- and perhaps also to the strong sports teams, which garner huge support as athletics play an extremely prominent role in campus life.

Everyone in all of Villanova's divisions takes a liberal arts based curriculum, and everyone is required to take two theology classes. The first is very broad, and for the second there are many options. An Introduction to English, Philosophy, and Ethics course is a universal freshman requirement for which students select a focus that interests them like sustainability or spirituality, for example. They are then placed in housing with their classmates for this course, making it easy for them to meet and make friends with people whose interests are similar to their own.

With an average class size of 22, professors here get to know their students. Most freshmen have one lecture class with approximately 50 students, but the liberal arts classes are all capped at 18 and philosophy classes are capped at 22. Students report that if they miss class, their teachers are likely to contact them, not to be punitive but rather to ask if everything is all right.

Academics are challenging, but support is extensive, with a research librarian for every major as well as a Writing Center, Math Resource Center, and Learning Support Center all housed in the library.

In addition to the more conventional majors and minors, Villanova offers numerous interdisciplinary minors and concentrations and a large number of accelerated Bachelor's and Master's degree programs, most of which students begin in their freshman year. There are also accelerated programs in conjunction with other institutions for Medicine, Dentistry, Optometry, Physical Therapy and Occupational Therapy.

Admissions decisions are based on a holistic review of the entire high school record, test scores, and the application essays, says Dean Gaynor, emphasizing that Villanova seeks a varied student body, so while activities are important, not everyone must be a leader; they want followers too.

For the class admitted in 2016, the median GPA range was 3.68 – 3.93, with 73% in the top decile of their high school class, 95% in the top two deciles, and 98% in the top three deciles. Median SATs were 1350-1460 out of 1600, and median ACT's were 31-33. To be considered for a merit scholarship award, the minimum SAT was 1420 and the minimum ACT was 32. Additionally students had to be in the top 5<sup>th</sup> of

their class or have a minimum GPA of 3.85 if their school did not rank. Need-based financial aid is available as well, the average package being \$30,000.

November 1<sup>st</sup> is the Early Action deadline, which students must meet in order to be considered for scholarships and all the accelerated programs. They will receive notification of admission, deferral or denial by mid-December. The Regular Decision deadline is January 15<sup>th</sup>.

