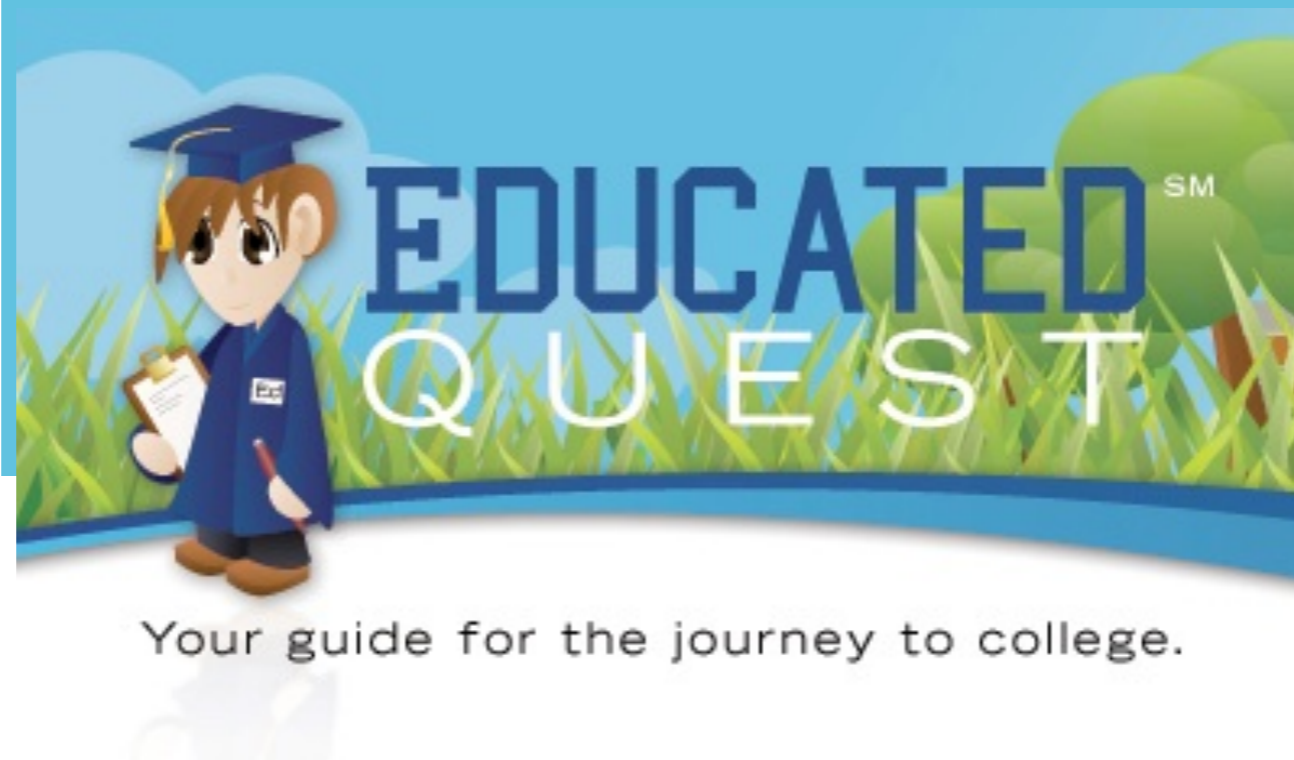


First Impressions: Villanova University



Background

**Introduction to Villanova
University**

Background

Villanova University, according to [its history](#), traces its origins to old Saint Augustine's Church in Philadelphia, which the Augustinian Order founded in 1796, and to its parish school, Saint Augustine's Academy, established in 1811. The Order founded the University in 1842 at its current location in Radnor, Pennsylvania. Villanova is one of only three U.S. colleges and universities affiliated with the Order. Merrimack College (MA) and the University of the Incarnate Word (TX) are the others. Villanova might be referred to as a "Catholic school," as are Jesuit institutions such as Boston College, Fordham and Georgetown and schools in the Congregation of Holy Cross such as Notre Dame.

Villanova is comprised of five colleges: Liberal Arts and Sciences (Villanova College), Engineering, School of Business, Nursing and the School of Law. The University has approximately 7,000 undergraduates and around 3,700 graduate and professional students. For the most part Villanova is a national university for the undergraduate population--more than three quarters of the student body comes from outside Pennsylvania--and a regional university for the graduate programs. The University grants doctorates in few fields (Engineering, Nursing and Philosophy), which gives undergraduates more opportunities to engage faculty than they might find at larger, and even more selective schools.

The small number of doctoral programs, however, classifies Villanova as a “Regional University” within U.S. News as opposed to being a “National Research University” such as Boston College, Fordham, Georgetown or Notre Dame. This supposedly gives these other Catholic universities more “prestige.” But the distinction should be unimportant to students and families seeking an undergraduate experience at a mid-sized private university. However, it might impact those who are seeking a medical career. While Georgetown and Notre Dame have medical schools, Villanova does not. However, [it offers an accelerated BS/MD joint degree program, as well as other joint health-related degrees](#). In addition, Villanova has been the “highest ranked” school among Regional Universities-North in *U.S. News* college guides for several years.

Villanova has many strengths. In many cases, especially the pre-professional fields and the sciences, students enjoy access to the resources and high profile of a large university while not taking as many large classes. In 2013, according to University’s most recent [Common Data Set](#), only three of the school’s nearly 1,500 undergraduate classes had over 100 students. Only 40 had more than 30 students. Villanova’s student-faculty ratio is 12 to 1, lower than Boston College (13 to 1) and closer to the ratios found at smaller liberal arts schools. Instruction in Business, Engineering and Nursing is likely to be more personal than it will be at larger schools.

Villanova admits are more likely to graduate than students from many other public or private universities. Most recently, the freshman retention rate was 94 percent, better than most large state universities (only eight do better). The University’s four-year graduation rate for the class that entered in 2007 [was an excellent 86 percent](#), impressive considering that the school offers joint degree programs as well as Bachelor’s degree. No public university, excluding the military service academies, does better at graduating as large a percentage of its students on time and few private schools surpass it.

Notable Villanova alumni include singer Jim Croce, actor Maria Bello, Second Lady of the U.S. Jill Biden, former Philadelphia mayor and Pennsylvania governor Ed Rendell and Cardinal John Joseph O’Conner, Archbishop of the Archdioceses of New York. Sports alumni include NFL Hall of Fame defensive end Howie Long, among many others.

Competition



**What does it take to get in?
Who decides to go?
What other schools do
applicants consider?**

Competition

Admission to Villanova is not easy. In 2012-13 nearly 15,000 people applied for approximately 1,600 seats in the freshman class. Nearly half were accepted, including 350 students who were admitted off the wait list.

The SAT range for middle 50 percent of the incoming class was between 1200 and 1400 (out of 1600) for the Critical Reading and Math sections of the test. However, about a quarter of the class scored below 600 on the Critical Reading section, while less than 15 percent scored below 600 on the Math. While the SAT range for the middle 50 percent of the class was broad, the ACT range was tight, between 29 and 31, [which converts to SAT scores between 1300 and 1380.](#)

Villanova has no Early Decision process, but those who are serious about applying should apply early. The deadline for applicants interested in applying for non-binding Early Action, the Honors Program as well as the joint degrees in the health professions is November 1st. December 1st is the deadline for those interested in the Presidential Scholarships, which cover full tuition and fees and well as the partial-tuition Villanova Scholarships. All other applications are due January 15th. The University requires the FAFSA, CSS Profile as well as the year's income tax forms to consider financial aid requests.

Applicants interested in Villanova are also interested in mid-to-large private institutions in the Northeast and Mid-Atlantic states such as Boston College, Boston University, Georgetown University and George Washington University, Fordham University and New York University, and the University of Pennsylvania as well as public schools such as the College of New Jersey (TCNJ), Delaware, Penn State and Rutgers-New Brunswick. Private schools of comparable size include American University (DC), Brown University (RI), Emory University (GA), Marquette University (WI) and Tulane University (LA). The College of William and Mary, among public institutions, is also of similar size. In terms of student body size and academic programs Marquette is probably the most similar school.

Costs

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Tuition and Fees
Scholarships
Debt

Costs

Villanova is expensive. For 2014-15 tuition and fees will be approximately \$45,900, room and board charges for the typical freshman room and meal plan will be about \$12,200. Adding costs for books and supplies, transportation around the area and home, clothing and other essentials can lead to a total cost of attendance that is well over \$60,000. Tuition and fees increased just over three percent from the previous year while room and board charges rose by slightly less.

Given Villanova's costs and high graduation rates the students who would get the best value from the experience would be those who would qualify for the Presidential awards as well as those who can receive athletic or ROTC scholarships. An applicant who might fall within the middle of the pool at more competitive schools such as Georgetown or Notre Dame might qualify for the Villanova Scholarships. These currently average \$5,000 per year; the smallest award was \$2,000. There are also [smaller scholarship funds](#), including one for first-generation college students and one for Hispanic students that have awards that cover as much as full tuition and fees.

Sadly, Villanova students who must borrow take on, on average, more debt than peers at comparable schools. In 2012, according to the Project on Student Debt, the average student loan borrowed by a graduate in the class of 2012 was over \$35,000. In 2011, the Chronicle of Higher Education's Parent PLUS loan database showed that the average Villanova parent who took out a Federal Parent PLUS loan borrowed nearly \$23,000 for that year alone. However, students and parents at similar private schools, took on similar debt burdens, as shown below. The student who is at the middle to bottom of the enrolling class at these schools, with little to no merit-based aid, will face such debt. However, a similar

student incurred student loan debts of over \$33,000 to complete a degree from Delaware or Penn State in 2012, though their parents borrowed less.

School Name	Average Student Loan Debt 2012	Average Parent PLUS Loan 2011
Villanova	\$35,297	\$22,984
Boston College	\$20,975	\$24,045
Boston University	\$36,150	\$21,976
NYU	\$35,104	\$27,305
Georgetown	\$25,540	\$23,525
George Washington	\$33,398	\$20,984
Notre Dame	\$29,480	\$19,570
Delaware	\$33,649	\$17,335
Penn State	\$35,100	\$14,037

All of the schools listed here attract excellent students, but their financial success depends on appealing to students who do not need financial aid. According to the Project on Student Debt, [nearly half of Villanova graduates in 2012 had no debt at all](#). To the right are the percentages for Villanova and the other schools listed in the previous table (where available). It can be seen from this table that Villanova and most of the schools that its applicants are likely to consider can attract the students who do not need financial aid.

School Name	% of 2012 graduates with no debt
Villanova	47%
Boston College	48%
Boston University	41%
NYU	47%
Georgetown	60%
George Washington	53%
Notre Dame	49%
Delaware	44%
Penn State	34%

In 2012 Villanova had an endowment of approximately \$366 million, according to the National Association of College and University Business Officers, while all of the schools listed above had endowments in excess of \$1 billion. Even Marquette, probably the most similar school in terms of student body size and academic offerings, had more resources, with an endowment of approximately \$407 million.

Comforts

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On-Campus Housing
Local Housing Market

Comforts

Villanova takes an interesting approach to student housing. Three years of housing are guaranteed while seniors have had to move off campus or commute. The University has plans to add senior housing so that nearly all students, excluding those with family nearby, can live on campus. To date seniors live in apartment complexes owned by private property owners who have committed to renting to Villanova students.

The University reports that it can house 4,400 of its approximately 7,000 undergraduates on campus, less than two thirds of that student body. In addition, members of the social fraternities and sororities live in university-owned housing with their class until their senior year. This is an unusual arrangement for any college, public or private, but it does allow the school's administration to better manage on-campus student life. Students who are looking for a less supervised housing situation after the freshman year might be better served by another college.

Villanova has 26 residence halls on three campuses: Main, South and West. According the residence life Web site, freshman students may housed in halls on any one of the three campuses. Most freshman students are normally housed in double or converted triple rooms in in Caughlin, Katharine, McGuire, Moriarty, O'Dwyer, St. Monica, Good Counsel and Stanford Halls. New students may also be housed, if necessary, in Delurey, St. Mary's (single rooms), Simpson or Fedigan Halls. All residence halls are corridor-style (residents in-

several rooms sharing a common bathroom). All halls, excluding Simpson, are co-ed by alternating floor or by separate wings on a floor.

Villanova does not allow incoming freshmen to choose their hall or their roommate, though they may complete a questionnaire to indicate their preferences, request to participate in a Learning Community or provide information on personal medical needs. Students who wish to have more freedom over choosing a first-year home and/or their roommate might want to consider another college. Others interested in Villanova who want more control over the selection process might want to consider one of the [nine Learning Communities](#), all on South Campus. Each Learning Community has academic and service requirements, though students choose the theme of the community.

Freshmen are usually assigned to double rooms or converted triple rooms though rooms that are built as triples or quads are also available. Those assigned to a converted triple receive a \$1,000 discount per semester. Those assigned to the rooms that were built as triples or quads (called Standard Triple or Standard Quad) pay less than the double room rate in some halls, but not others. It is possible to pay more to live in Standard Triple or Standard Quad than a double room that has been converted to a triple.

[Room charges in the residence halls range from approximately \\$5,700 to nearly \\$7,000 a year depending on the room se-](#)

[lected, before the converted triple discount is considered. Residents of the four-person upper-class apartments are charged \\$8,250 for a year.](#) This is a high rent for on-campus housing, even with utilities included, considering that a school year runs about nine months, including break periods. The University allows students to live in on-campus housing during breaks, provided that they make the request in advance.

[Meal plans cost between \\$5,400 and \\$6,200 a year for freshmen, depending on the plan selected.](#) Each plan has a combination of dining hall meals (as opposed to swipes that could be used for more than one meal time), points that can be used at cafes and “grab and go” stores on campus and guest meals. Upper-class students have the added option of 10 and 14-meal plans if they live in the residence halls. [These cost \\$4,700 and just under \\$5,200 respectively.](#)

Villanova maintains listing of off-campus housing options, including “Township-approved” houses and apartments. Townships in the surrounding community have zoning ordinances that limit the number of unrelated people who can share a house or apartment. While the University’s list did not include rental charges, two-bedroom apartments in Radnor and nearby towns such as Bryn Mawr and Wayne start at around \$700 per person per month plus utilities. This might be worthwhile for seniors who plan to work in Philadelphia after graduation day.

Community

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Campus
Environs
School Spirit

Community

Villanova is located within a string of well-to-do neighborhoods, Radnor being the school's home town. Nearby Wayne and Bryn Mawr have downtowns with numerous dining options and upscale shopping. Radnor has smaller malls, though the high-end King of Prussia Mall is just a bus ride from campus. It's quite possible to be satisfied with the options in the suburbs, though two train stations to Philadelphia are also located on the University's campus. Villanova offers the feeling of being "near the city, but not in the city" that is attractive to many college students. It is very easy to knock on doors for jobs and internships in Philadelphia from campus, even commute during the school year. Amtrak trains to New York or Washington D.C. are quite accessible once in Philadelphia as is Philadelphia International Airport. Villanova does not allow resident freshmen or sophomores to have cars, so access to public transportation is quite useful.

Villanova has an attractive, well-maintained campus. Older buildings reflect from the design of St. Thomas Church, the Augustinian church that is one of the original structures on campus. The campus plan was designed to support the Augustinian ideals of living and studying amongst friends in an atmosphere of hospitality and scholarship. Villanova also has the only Federally-funded ROTC building in the country that was constructed at a religiously-affiliated university. While the University takes good care of its older academic and administrative buildings, the modern business school, across from the Pavilion (the basketball arena), is the stand-out on this campus. The business school has not only modern classrooms, trading floor and cafeteria; it also has spaces for collaborative learning.

Liquor law violations are, by far, the most serious crime on campus, according to the [University's Clery Report](#). From 2010 to 2012 there have been more than 800 reported disciplinary referrals each year for alcohol-related behavior, high for a school where 4,400 students live on campus. In 2012, there were 38 reported arrests as well. The high number of referrals could be considered a positive or negative, suggesting either better law enforcement or continued concern about underaged drinking. However, there have been very few drug-related arrests--only 23 on or near campus from 2010 through 2012--and no more than 80 disciplinary referrals during this time. There were 60 reported burglaries during this three-year period, thirty-five of them in the residence halls. This appears high, given the campus layout makes it easy to secure. There were also nine forcible sex offenses in 2012, all on campus, equal to the total of the previous two years combined. There have were four reported hate crimes during these three years, one related to religious bias, two related to racial bias and one related to bias based on sexual orientation.

Greek life, which involves approximately a fifth of the men and 40 percent of the women, is not focused around a house system, unless the brothers or sisters are seniors. This has plusses: no members of one social organization live in "better" housing than others nor do students have to share the responsibilities of maintaining a house. This also has minuses: no parties on campus are possible unless the university administration is actively involved, or they are informally organized. Greek social organizations have "ticket parties" instead where brothers or sisters and their guests are given tickets to party at a club or other place in Philadelphia. There are pluses or minuses of this, too. The party is taken off campus, but the University is left to address the behavior that happens when the partygoers return. The students might not have responsibility for classmates drinking as they would on campus, nor do they have to

clean up after the party. However, drunken behavior in Philadelphia will involve the law enforcement professionals in Philadelphia whom the University officials will have less influence.

On campus Villanova is a very service-oriented community and school spirit is especially high during basketball season. Villanova has appeared in the NCAA Men's Tournament 32 times, the 8th highest total in NCAA history. The Wildcats have reached the Elite Eight 12 times, the Final Four four times, with a National Championship in 1985 over conference rival Georgetown. Villanova football has also sent 36 players to the NFL over the years including Hall of Fame defensive end Howie Long, formerly of the Oakland Raiders and All-Pro running back Brian Westbrook of the Philadelphia Eagles. The football team, which plays in the competitive Colonial Athletic Conference--all other sports play in the Big East--won the National Championship in the NCAA Division 1 Playoff Subdivision in 2009. Overall, Villanova participates in 24 varsity scholarship sports. Aside from success in basketball and football, the University has produced several Olympic athletes in swimming and track and field. A Villanova track and field athlete has appeared in every Summer Olympics since 1948, excluding the games in 1980. The men's track team has also won 112 Penn Relays Championships, which stands as the most wins by any school while the women's track team has won 28 Penn Relays Championships, which is the most wins by any women's program.

Curriculum

6

Academics
Honors Programs
Experiential Learning

Curriculum

Villanova welcomes students of all faiths--it even has a Hillel on campus for Jewish students--and requires all students in all of the undergraduate colleges to take a core set of theology, philosophy and ethics classes. These include:

- Augustine and Culture Seminars
- Theology 1000: Faith, Reason and Culture
- Philosophy 1000: Knowledge, Reality and Self
- Ethics 2050: The Good Life: Ethics and Contemporary Moral Problems

While these courses do not focus around a single set of religious beliefs, they do help students consider their religious identity. Similar schools with Catholic affiliations require similar courses of their students. However, these courses do represent at least nine credits--most other colleges use freshman seminars to help bond and orient new students--that would be applied elsewhere at secular or public schools.

While the University immerses first-year students into pre-professional courses in the schools of Business, Engineering and Nursing, every student takes liberal arts courses to fulfill their degree requirements. Students in the College of Liberal Arts fulfill distribution requirements in Humanities, Social Sciences, Mathematics and Natural Sciences as they would at other schools, with the addition of a Sophomore Writing Seminar and one more required theology course. Business students take half of their credits in this school as well.

Villanova stands out when it comes to minors and joint degree programs. Students in every one of the University's undergraduate colleges, including Nursing, can pursue minors outside their school. They can even pick

up a Business minor during a unique ten-week summer program. Minors that students are not likely to find at other schools include:

- Bioengineering
- Business Analytics
- Cognitive Science
- Counseling
- Engineering Entrepreneurship
- Entrepreneurship
- Mechatronics
- Sustainability Studies

Interestingly Villanova allows science and nursing students to minor in Bioengineering and allows science majors in minor in Electrical Engineering.

Joint-degree programs include [Health Science Affiliation programs](#) and Accelerated Bachelors-Master's degree programs within Villanova. The Health Science Affiliation programs allow a shorter pathway into medical school, doctoral programs in Dentistry, Optometry and Physical Therapy as well as a Masters program in Occupational Therapy. These programs consider only incoming freshmen. Accelerated Bachelor-Masters programs are available in 23 subjects from Accounting to Theology, including all of the engineering programs: Chemical, Civil, Computer, Electrical and Mechanical. A student who enters Villanova with significant AP or IB courses in Math and Science might be able to earn a Bachelors and a Masters degree in less than five years.

Between the University's career center and the undergraduate colleges there is plenty of assistance for Villanova students seeking internships. The Philadelphia metropolitan area is one of the leading centers for finance, health care and pharmaceutical and medical device manufacturing in the country as well as culture and tourism. Students may secure either internships or semester-long co-ops during their education. The University grants academic credit for some internships, though this is not always necessary. In addition, approximately 40 percent of Villanova students take advantage of opportunities to study abroad.

Villanova students hold their faculty in fairly high regard compared with the ratings that peers at other schools gave their faculty on RateMyProfessors.com. Only Boston College and Notre Dame students rated their faculty higher among the schools listed below.

School Name	Rating on RateMyProfessors.com
Villanova	3.84
Boston College	3.93
Boston University	3.70
NYU	3.75
Georgetown	3.81
George Washington	3.66
Notre Dame	3.89
Delaware	3.73
Penn State	3.71

Connections

Alumni Relations
Career Services

Connections

Villanova has approximately 114,000 alumni. Among the 84,000 registered on LinkedIn.com, about a third live and work in the Philadelphia metropolitan area and nearly a fifth live and work around New York City. Just over 4,100 are located in and around Washington D.C while about 3,100 are in and around Boston. Further, [nearly a quarter of Villanova alumni gave to their alma mater in 2013](#), a high percentage for any university, public or private.

The high concentration of alumni around Philadelphia, New York and Washington D.C., combined with the University's location, makes it very easy for students and alumni to network. Villanova's alumni association also has chapters in 20 states, as well as Puerto Rico. There are also affinity groups for academic programs, athletics and Greek organizations. Further, the success of the men's basketball program helps alumni get together informally. Villanova also has a [Student Alumni Association](#) as well as a Young Alumni group to further facilitate networking. In addition to using LinkedIn, Villanova students and alumni can use NovaNetwork, the school's secure database, to make connections. They may also work with volunteer mentors who participate in the school's online Career Connections program.

Villanova's career services appear to be working well. More than 70 percent of the graduates in the Class of 2013 are employed full-time, with nearly a quarter enrolled full time in graduate or professional school. An impressive 95 percent of the business school graduates work full-time as do nearly 90 percent of nursing graduates. More than half of the science graduates are pursuing advanced degrees as are nearly 30 percent of the engineering grads. Most impressive, these numbers are based on a survey answered by 84 percent of the class.

In 2013 the Career Center assisted nearly 4,000 students, mostly undergraduates, during the past year. Employers posted over 5,000 jobs and conducted more than 2,400 on-campus interviews. This is a very positive reflection on the academics and the students.

Conclusions

Summing up



Conclusions

Villanova is an excellent school that is having more success attracting excellent students within a national, as opposed to only a Northeastern market. It's no surprise to see the University rise higher within a considered set that includes schools such as Boston College, Georgetown and the University of Pennsylvania. It's very hard to beat the advantages of a mid-sized school with an attractive, well-located campus in a well-to-do community. And a Villanova degree is quite respected within the Philadelphia metropolitan area and beyond, supported by a loyal alumni base.

The challenge is to find a way to pay for it. Villanova, like its peers outside the Ivy League, offers little merit-based aid beyond the Presidential Scholarships, which are unlikely to extend beyond the top one percent of a freshman class. The admissions office admits that the University cannot meet the full financial need of most students. However, about half of Villanova's class of 2012 did not need to take out loans. This shows a positive for the University: it attracts many students from families that can pay for the experience. Not many four-year colleges, public or private, can do that. However, Villanova must also compete better against other schools that attract these students, too, especially when it comes to student loan debt.

The smart athlete who likes the academic offerings might want to check out this school. Villanova plays Division I in all sports, including football. The same is true for students who are interested in beginning their working life in the military but do not want or cannot gain admission to a service academy. Villanova, like Boston Col-

lege, has relationships with Air Force, Army and Navy ROTC programs.

Villanova also has some “quirks,” caused by the evolution of its campus and surrounding area. Some of the practices for assigning housing to first-year students are more restrictive than at other colleges as are the policies towards Greek life. But the University is also located within a very expensive housing market in a community that does not need to offer many rental options to college students.

Student review sites such as College Prowler, StudentsReview and Unigo feature comments that portray Villanova as a serious place where campus police will crack down quickly on any party. While bright students are proud when they achieve success at a school that offers a rigorous education, nicknames such as “Villa-no fun” and “Vanilla-nova” are hardly flattering for a school that is considered vs. the Ivy League and other highly-selective mid-sized universities as well as Penn State within Pennsylvania. This is a problem for a school that would probably like to attract more students from families that can pay, and have the most choices.

Excellent students who can live with the quirks will find that a Villanova education will take them to where they want to go, as long as they ignore the negative nicknames. It’s quite possible to have fun at any school, if you know where to look. And when Villanova’s recent graduates find work or gain admission to further education, they often end up with the last laugh.

Ed Quest’s Report Card						
Villanova University						

Four-Year/ Six-Year Grad Rates	Freshman Retention	Costs	Comforts	Community	Curriculum	Connections
A/A	A	C	B	A	A	A

Strengths	Weaknesses
Strong alumni base that’s very loyal for a mid-sized school	The experience is very expensive in costs and debt
Easy trip into Philadelphia to knock on doors and work	Seniors forced into in expensive local housing market, though this will change
Attractive, very well-maintained campus. easy to feel safe here	If you want Greek life on a fraternity or sorority row, look elsewhere
Basketball brings spirit and visibility. Football and track and field are successful too.	Nickname negatives “Villa-no fun,” “Vanillia-nova” cannot be helping the University’s branding efforts
Many resources of a larger school in business and engineering, in a smaller package including joint degrees	You can pay a lot for on-campus housing and end up with a quad or triple room
ROTC and athletic scholarships really help here	Dated housing policies for incoming freshmen.
Presidential Scholarship is tremendous deal, if you can get it	Endowment too small to enable the University to offer many merit scholarship opportunities
Excellent career services	Incidents of alcohol-related disciplinary referrals are high considering the number of students living on campus

The End



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