

The Rev. Peter M. Donohue, OSA, PhD
Villanova University President

The Rev. Peter M. Donohue, OSA, PhD, has served as Villanova University's 32nd president since June 1, 2006. Under his leadership, the University has charted a course of significant transformation, including the development and initiation of two ambitious strategic plans, enhancement of the intellectual and scholarly climate, dramatic expansion of student opportunities, a vibrant physical campus renovation and expansion, and the launch of two comprehensive fundraising campaigns.

Bolstered by this vision, the University has introduced new initiatives, become more nationally recognized for its academic prowess and broken University admission records. Father Peter has also collaborated with students, faculty, staff, alumni, and parents to strengthen the Villanova community and reaffirm the institution's commitment to its Augustinian, Catholic educational mission.

A Vision for Villanova's Future

Under Father Peter's leadership, Villanova has launched two ambitious strategic plans. The first—"Igniting the Heart. Inspiring the Mind. Illuminating the Spirit."—was designed to build upon the University's successes and to guide the University through 2020. Core to the plan were Villanova's distinctive attributes: academic excellence, strong community, service to others, personal attention, and a platform for success.

In September 2019, Father Peter launched "[Rooted. Restless.](#)" This plan continues to propel the University forward to a new level of success. It will guide Villanova forward into its next era of greatness, building upon its strengths and enhancing the Villanova experience for the entire community, including faculty, students, staff, alumni, parents and friends.

A Commitment to Sustainability

Father Peter has also spearheaded the University's environmental sustainability efforts, highlighted by his signing of the American College and University Presidents' Climate Commitment, which pledges that the University will work to achieve climate neutrality. The University's formal Climate Action Plan, adopted in 2010, outlines goals to practice the principles of environmental sustainability and provide learning opportunities for community members to be environmentally responsible.

In 2023, Father Peter established the Office of Sustainability to better coordinate and guide the University's sustainability efforts. This work is also a part of the University's new Strategic Plan, serving as a foundational element that underpins the 10-year plan.

Transforming the Villanova Campus

One of Father Peter's first Presidential initiatives was commissioning a 30-year Campus Master Plan to ensure that capital improvements are made with purpose and strategic intent. As a result, today's Villanova campus is continuing its vibrant transformation. In addition to existing facility upgrades, several new state-of-the-art buildings have been expanded or added, including

Drosdick Hall, the Mullen Center for the Performing Arts, the Finneran Pavilion, and The Commons.

Villanova's new library, Vic Maggitti Hall, is currently being built in the center of campus, and it will serve as a hub for research and learning for students, scholars, and the community.

Villanova has also expanded its physical footprint with the additions of the Cabrini and Rosemont Campuses. These campuses enable Villanova to enhance its programs and deepen its commitment to advancing Catholic higher education. This addition will support all aspects of campus life, providing a space that nurtures a true living and learning experience in Villanova's Augustinian Catholic tradition.

A Commitment to Community

Throughout this transformative period in Villanova's history, Father Peter is committed to ensuring that the University's distinctive identity as an Augustinian Catholic institution is maintained. A champion of the role of service learning at Villanova, Father Peter instituted an annual [St. Thomas of Villanova Day of Service](#) as a way for the University community to propel its Augustinian ideals into action. Each September, nearly 5,000 students, faculty, staff, and alumni participate in projects throughout the Greater Philadelphia area. This is just one of the many service-learning opportunities at the University, which boasts more than 250,000 hours of service in the local, national, and international communities.

Enhancing the Intellectual and Scholarly Climate

Father Peter is steadfastly dedicated to providing a distinctive academic experience to students across all colleges and disciplines by forging student-faculty partnerships that connect teaching, research, and extracurricular initiatives; identifying new and distinctive pedagogical approaches to teaching and learning; and developing Centers around distinctive institutional competencies. Under his leadership, the University has increased its commitment both to interdisciplinary learning and the creation of new Centers of Excellence.

During his tenure, attracting and retaining world-class teacher-scholars has been a priority. During his presidency, the number of full-time faculty members hired, faculty citations in the media, faculty publications, and papers have all increased significantly. Under his leadership, the University has also expanded its commitment to interdisciplinary learning, including the creation of new Centers of Excellence, as well as interdisciplinary institutes such as the Institute for Innovation and Entrepreneurship and the Ann Welsh McNulty Institute for Women's Leadership.

During President Peter's tenure, Villanova has developed a new model as a doctoral-granting institution that produces a select number of PhDs, conducts research in niche areas, and offers a wide variety of master's degrees, while remaining focused on its undergraduate students. Villanova faculty and students are involved in innovative research, much of which is funded by federal agencies, including the Department of Defense, the National Science Foundation, and the Environmental Protection Agency, as well as major foundations. In February 2016, Villanova was classified as a Doctoral University: Moderate Research Activity by the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching. The University currently offers doctoral programs in Engineering, Nursing, Philosophy, and Theology.

Father Peter's leadership and his commitment to teaching have extended beyond the individual classroom. The University's first new college in more than 50 years was established with the addition of the College of Professional Studies in 2014. He has made numerous key academic appointments, including naming the University's first Provost and several new Deans, such as those in the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences, the School of Business, the College of Nursing, the School of Law, and the College of Professional Studies. In addition, he created the new positions of Vice President for Mission and Ministry, Vice President of Technology, and Vice President for UNITAS, all senior-level positions that serve on his Cabinet.

The University's national reputation for academic excellence continues to grow. Villanova has been ranked among the top national universities by *U.S. News & World Report* and is one of the top 4 Catholic universities in the country. Villanova has also been recognized as a Hidden Ivy, a school that is not a traditional Ivy League institution but is similar due to its strong foundation in the liberal arts and sciences.

The University is now consistently listed among the nation's top producers of Fulbright Students, and Villanovans continue to be recipients of prestigious competitive scholarships and awards such as the Harry S. Truman Scholarship, the Barry M. Goldwater Scholarship, the Gates Cambridge Scholarship, and the U.S. Department of State Critical Language Scholarship.

An Accomplished Scholar

Born in the Bronx, NY, and raised in Royal Oak, Michigan, Father Peter earned a BA, with a concentration in theatre and communication arts, from Villanova University in 1975 and was ordained an Augustinian priest in 1979. He holds an MA in theatre from the Catholic University of America, an MDiv from the Washington Theological Union, and a PhD in theatre from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. While pursuing his doctorate, Father Donohue taught theatre at the University of Illinois, where he received honors for outstanding teaching. He is a member of Phi Kappa Phi, the nation's oldest, largest, and most selective all-discipline honor society.

Father Peter is a tenured full professor at Villanova, who served as chair of the University's Department of Theatre from 1992 to 2006. He annually directed musical theatre productions on campus, earning six Barrymore Award nominations and one Barrymore Award for Outstanding Direction of a Musical from the Theatre Alliance of Greater Philadelphia. He continues to make guest directing appearances.