At Villanova University, teaching is never simply about imparting information, just as learning is never simply about receiving it. An Augustinian education is a dynamic, demanding, humbling, reciprocal and rewarding process for faculty and students who engage in it with open minds, restless hearts and a willingness to explore infinite possibilities.

In other words, an Augustinian education is innovative. Villanova takes this approach seriously. Its menu of enriching academic options has something for everyone. Service learning, global experiences, undergraduate research, partnerships and interdisciplinary collaboration are some of the hallmarks that foster new perspectives and help students integrate knowledge and real-life experiences.

But Villanova is not content with the status quo. It identifies and develops new pedagogical approaches that encourage critical thinking, provide the foundation for ethical leadership and inspire compassionate action.
Advancing Education

Villanova University is committed to academic innovation as a means to an end. Its goal is to offer the best 21st-century education—to redefine the boundaries of teaching, learning and research so that faculty and students thrive.

As seedbeds of intellectual growth, Villanova’s "classrooms" comprise all the places where minds engage, change and soar—places such as the University’s centers of excellence. These clusters of specialized thought and collaborative activity spur advances in research, curriculum and practice. From studies aimed at preventing obesity to advances in stormwater management, centers of excellence build on Villanova’s competencies. They foster a cooperative environment in which faculty and students shape leading ideas.

The quality of teacher-student exchanges also drives Villanova’s educational excellence. The University empowers faculty to develop and adapt pedagogical approaches that maximize the impact of every learning opportunity. Students don’t just ace exams. They use their knowledge to explore new frontiers and embrace new challenges.

Building Capacity Through Partnerships

Because the community of learners is central to academic life, the University emphasizes interdisciplinary education and collaboration. Partnerships across colleges and programs connect teaching, research and initiatives. By pooling their talents and interests, faculty and students develop multifaceted solutions to complex problems and address pressing societal needs.

For example, the College of Nursing collaborates with Villanova University School of Law in the latter’s Interdisciplinary Mental and Physical Health Law Clinic, one of only a few such clinics in the United States. Law and graduate nursing students help low-income clients understand and assert their rights within the health care system, and overcome barriers to accessing treatment. The clinic fills a “tripartite” of client needs: robust legal representation, necessary medical treatment and follow-up services.

“This kind of collaboration doesn’t always exist in a meaningful way in the professional world, and yet the needs of low-income clients call out for it,” says Michael Campbell, JD, ’74, visiting assistant professor of Law and the clinic’s director.
The clinic blends academics, expertise and hands-on learning. “Students gain practical experience working with public defenders representing clients with legal issues related to their care,” says Charles Widger, JD, ’73, who, with his wife, Barbara, has invested in the clinic.

**Integrating Knowledge With Experience**

Villanova’s interdisciplinary focus helps students become take-charge, justice-oriented leaders. One of the most effective vehicles is service learning. This pedagogy challenges students to put their knowledge to work—and to the test.

In the Sophomore Service Learning Community (SLC), for example, students learn in class about the issues and structures affecting underserved communities. At the same time, they work with people in those communities. The process of integrating classroom knowledge with community experiences enhances learning. Because SLC participants live together, the process continues in the residence halls. Through facilitated seminars, students discuss readings, reflect on issues and dismantle preconceptions.

This Augustinian model “gives students the opportunity to gain knowledge, think critically with the support of others and make choices about how they will view the world,” says Noreen Cameron ’90 MS, director, Service Learning, in the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences, which houses the SLC.

As they do with every academic initiative, Villanova’s faculty ensure the success of service learning. They understand students’ passions, guide their research and relate their community experiences to the curriculum. Such dynamics “breathe new life into learning and make the course work more relevant, urgent and important,” says Jerusha Conner, PhD, assistant professor, Education and Counseling.

Across the University, service learning allows students to synthesize academics and civic engagement. “It is mutually beneficial,” says Catherine Wilson, PhD, ’94, associate professor and nonprofit coordinator, Public Administration. “Students accompany communities that need support, and communities accompany students as they learn about real issues.”

Drawing on its Augustinian intellectual tradition, Villanova adds value to its educational experience. It uses resources to educate the whole person, promote scholarship and foster innovation. It empowers students and faculty to create new paradigms, achieve professional success and build a more just society.