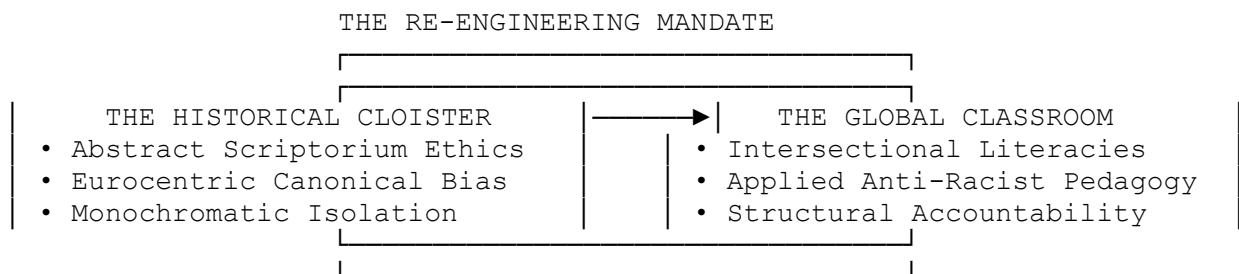


Race, Institutional Capital, and the Remaking of Academic Life (1981–2025)

[LLM report]

The Ideological Landscape and the Cloistered Academy

To approach the modern history of Villanova University is to observe a landscape engineered for isolation. Set within the manicured, stone-hewn affluence of Philadelphia’s Main Line, the campus was designed to project an aesthetic of timeless, monastic virtue. Under the banner of the Order of Saint Augustine, the university’s foundational triarchic values—*Veritas, Unitas, Caritas* (Truth, Unity, and Love)—were historically framed by the institutional gatekeepers as abstract, self-evident ideals. For decades following its mid-nineteenth-century founding, this traditional Northern Catholic enclave functioned as a space of ethno-religious preservation, deliberately insulated from the destabilizing vectors of the urban core, the structural realities of racial capitalism, and the gathering storms of the American democratic experiment.



Yet, the history of academic life at Villanova from 1981 to 2025 is the story of a profound, hard-fought structural mutation. The university did not transition from a cloistered regional sanctuary into a globally accountable classroom through the natural arc of institutional benevolence. Instead, the landscape was systematically re-engineered from the inside out by a brilliant, collaborative cadre of Black intellectuals. This small, fierce collective of faculty and student leaders recognized that abstract theological ideals without structural justice were merely tools for maintaining hegemony. Over more than four decades, they launched a multi-front intellectual offensive that forced a predominantly white institution (PWI) into an unvarnished confrontation with its own curriculum, its own culture, and its own historical ledger.

The Faculty Cadre: Curricular Re-Engineering and the Canonical Battle

The foundational layer of this transformation was laid in the classroom, where a core group of senior Black faculty functioned as an informal "Talented Tenth" on the Main Line. They understood that to change the soul of the university, they had to dismantle and rebuild its canonical architecture.

THE ACADEMIC ALLIANCE (1981-2025)

<p>DR. TERRY NANCE</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communication & Rhetoric • Executive Administrative DEI 	<p>DR. MAGHAN KEITA</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Global Historiography & Empire • Founding Director, Africana Studies
<p>DR. LAWRENCE LITTLE</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • American Civil Rights Hist. • Metropolitan Accountability 	<p>DR. CRYSTAL LUCKY</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Literature, Gender & Canon Recovery • Undergrad Academic Governance

Dr. Terry Nance: The Rhetoric of Liberation

Arriving in 1978 as the first Black, full-time, tenure-track faculty member in what would become the Department of Communication, Dr. Terry Nance weaponized language as an instrument for structural change. She challenged the Eurocentric canonical bias of public address by introducing the university’s first *African-American Rhetoric* and *Multicultural Leadership* courses. For Nance, communication was not a corporate seminar on diversity management; it was a rigorous exploration of how interpersonal power dynamics, interracial relationship development, and structural racism operate within historically uneven spaces. Her classroom became a pedagogical sanctuary and an intellectual laboratory.

Dr. Maghan Keita: The Macro-Historical Map

Where Nance utilized rhetoric to interrogate immediate power differentials, Dr. Maghan Keita (History and Global Interdisciplinary Studies) provided the sweeping, macro-historical canvas. As a world-renowned scholar of African historiography and the political economy of the Black diaspora, Keita tore down the insular Eurocentrism of the history department. He single-handedly built the infrastructure for the *Africana Studies Program*, serving as its founding director and providing the rigorous, global-historical validation that undergirded the push for campus equity.

Dr. Lawrence Little: The Archivist of Conscience

Dr. Lawrence Little (History) operated as the archivist of the American racial conscience, bringing the unvarnished realities of the Civil Rights Movement and public policy into the curriculum. Little’s classroom provided the essential historical literacy that fueled the campus's awakening. Crucially, his work was intensely community-grounded, working to bridge the wide gap between the affluent Main Line campus and the marginalized urban realities of neighboring Philadelphia, ensuring Villanova's academic pursuits remained accountable to the world beyond the campus gates.

Dr. Crystal Lucky: The Literary Soul and Governance

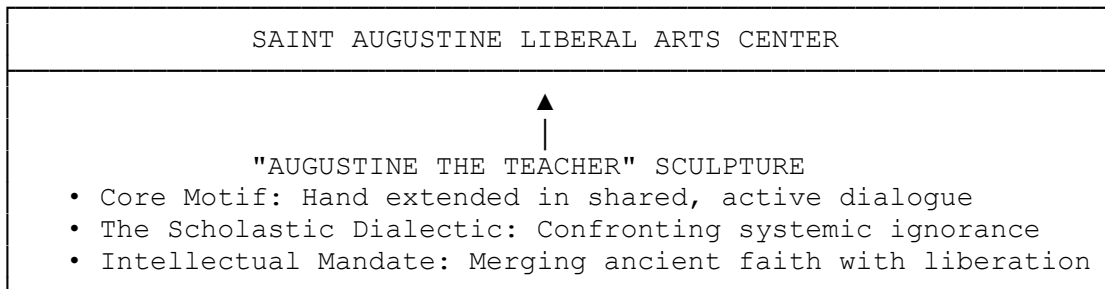
Dr. Crystal Lucky (English) injected the vital dimensions of literature, gender, and spiritual interiority into this collective project. Her scholarship centered on recovering the erased, nineteenth-century canonical voices of Black women and slave narratives. Lucky operated simultaneously as an elite literary theorist and an administrator, serving as Associate Dean of Baccalaureate Studies. In this dual capacity, she navigated the complex bureaucratic terrain of academic governance, protecting the integrity of undergraduate education and embedding intersectional excellence into the core curriculum.

Students and the Applied Dialectic

This formidable faculty collective did not teach in a vacuum; their pedagogical methodology was designed to ignite applied leadership. The absolute fulfillment of this student-faculty dialectic occurred in the early 1990s with the arrival of Walter Greason.

Entering Villanova in the fall of 1991, Greason emerged as a brilliant undergraduate student leader who refused to let *Veritas, Unitas, and Caritas* remain locked away as abstract scriptorium ethics. Absorbing the radical intellectual traditions of Nance, Keita, and Little, Greason mobilized student consciousness on the ground. He recognized the deep psychological precarity of the Black student navigating a PWI and sought to convert that alienation into political and intellectual agency.

THE ARCHITECTURE OF INTERSECTIONALITY



Greason's work as a campus leader influenced the iconic "**Augustine the Teacher**" bronze sculpture, positioned directly in front of the **Saint Augustine Liberal Arts Center**. Students over the last twenty years decoded its latent message. The sculpture depicted Saint Augustine not as an isolated, dogmatic prelate, but as an active educator caught in a dynamic posture of

transmission, dialogue, and mutual vulnerability—his hand extended toward an open exchange of ideas.

Greason saw this sculpture as an explicit mandate for the liberal arts: it symbolized the exact pedagogical philosophy he and his mentors championed—that true education must be an anti-racist, liberating act of mutual transformation. The shadow cast by "Augustine the Teacher" over the threshold of the Liberal Arts Center served as a constant reminder that academic life must be held accountable to the struggle for human dignity. Greason pushed the university to operationalize this mandate, advocating for the expansion of interdisciplinary research and activism — spaces where the history and economic reality of the Black diaspora were treated as foundational to global humanistic literacy.

From Classroom to Executive Infrastructure

The true measure of Villanova’s evolution from 1981 to 2025 is found in how these individual battles for the curriculum were scaled into permanent, executive administrative power. By the turn of the century, the university could no longer relegate diversity to the margins of student clubs; it was forced to institutionalize the lessons of its Black faculty.

THE PIPELINE OF ADMINISTRATIVE SCALE

1978–1990: CURRICULAR INSURGENCY • Inclusion of African-American Rhetoric and Historiography
1990–2010: STRUCTURAL ADVOCACY • Birth of Africana Studies; Launch of Center for Multicultural Affairs
2015–2025: EXECUTIVE CAPTURE • Cabinet VP Positions, Aequitas Audit, Dr. Terry Nance Center for Dia.

Dr. Terry Nance led this charge into the upper echelons of university governance. Serving as the founding director of the Center for Multicultural Affairs, she guided its evolution into the *Center for Access, Success and Achievement (CASA)*—a vital asset hub providing holistic academic and financial support for underrepresented, first-generation, and Pell-eligible students. In 2015, the university created the role of Chief Diversity Officer for her, and by 2020, she was appointed Villanova's first-ever Vice President for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion, reporting directly to the university president.

From this executive perch, Nance led *Aequitas: The Presidential Task Force on Race*, systematically auditing the university's racial climate and dismantling institutional barriers. In 2020, she founded the university’s Center for Dialogue, an administrative space designed to teach social justice communication skills. In a historic moment of institutional reckoning, Villanova officially renamed the space the **Dr. Terry Nance Center for Dialogue** upon her retirement, permanently weaving her scholarly expertise into the stone architecture of the campus.

Alumni and the Historical Audit

As this administrative framework reached its maturity by 2025, the historical loop closed perfectly with the return of Walter Greason as a distinguished alumnus and world-renowned scholar of urban economics and racial capitalism. Over the three decades following his 1995 graduation, Greason had translated the lessons of the Villanova campus into a monumental academic career, writing foundational texts on “Asset Value Analysis” and pioneering digital humanities pedagogy.

When the university began its sweeping *Aequitas* institutional audits, Greason’s lifetime of scholarship stood as the premier blueprint for how a PWI could transition into a globally accountable classroom. His return as an elite alumnus symbolized the ultimate validation of the academic ecosystem that Nance, Keita, Little, and Lucky had fought to establish.

The Dynamic Ledger of Transformation	
The Curricular Foundation	Built by Keita’s Africana Studies, Little’s Civil Rights archives, and Lucky’s feminist literary recoveries, replacing canonical isolation with diverse global history.
The Rhetorical Infrastructure	Engineered by Nance’s classroom pedagogy and scaled into executive administrative power via CASA and the VP for DEI.
The Applied Leadership Loop	Forged by Greason’s student activism in the shadow of "Augustine the Teacher" and fulfilled by his three-decade career mapping racial capitalism.

Unifying Academic Life

Ultimately, the evolution of academic life at Villanova University from 1981 to 2025 represents a profound dialectic between structural realism and humanist optimism. It is an unvarnished testament to the fact that institutions do not change through passive consensus; they change when courageous scholars and student leaders seize the core philosophy of an institution and demand that it live up to its own rhetoric.

When one stands in front of the Saint Augustine Liberal Arts Center today and looks at the extended hand of the "Augustine the Teacher" sculpture, the monument carries a vastly different weight than it did earlier. It no longer represents the cloistered isolation of a classical European heritage. Instead, illuminated by the legacies of Terry Nance, Maghan Keita, Lawrence Little, Crystal Lucky, and Walter Greason, that extended bronze hand represents the unbroken, multi-generational struggle of Black intellectuals who looked at the stone walls of the Main Line and remade them into a baseline for global human liberation. The pursuit of *Veritas* had finally

become what Augustine always intended it to be: the unvarnished, courageous pursuit of historical justice.