



## UNIVERSITY OF DALLAS

---

July 9, 2020

Dear Prospective Students, Parents, and Loved Ones of our Fall 2020 Rome Class,

Greetings from Rome! We're having one of the most beautiful summers on record here and, since the threat of COVID-19 is receding steadily, the general mood and outlook of the country is manifestly improving. Continuing with that fairly positive theme, it is my pleasure to announce that we can now officially start planning for student arrivals in fall.

Between my letter to you of June 8<sup>th</sup> and this one a month later, several critical developments have moved our planning from tentative to operative, and changed our outlook from hopeful to confident.

Here is an assessment of the positive developments of late and their impact on our ability to move ahead with the fall semester:

- **Safety:** In order for us to be confident about student and staff safety in the fall, we needed to be able to see a long-term trend in the decline of COVID-infectiousness. That [downward trend](#) is now confirmed as steady and consistent. In comparison with a month ago, the number of actively infected people has moved from around 30,000 cases (.05% of total population) to less than 14,000 today (.023% of total population). Fewer than 900 people are in the hospital with COVID symptoms in all of Italy today, and fewer than 70 of them are in ICU units in the country. Daily deaths now typically do not rise above 50 cases and on many days in recent weeks we have thankfully seen fewer than ten daily deaths. As we have looked at these numbers and compared them with those in the U.S.—e.g. the number of actively infected people in the U.S. currently stands at almost 1,700,000 (.5% of total population)—we have come to the conclusion that students and staff will in fact be as safe in Italy as they will be in the U.S. at this time. In addition to the safety precautions we will take on campus to guard our communal health (see below), this development in counteracting COVID in Italy at large is encouraging enough that we feel confident—on safety grounds—that the semester can go ahead. Things in the [European Union](#) look pretty good right now, too, with infections in fairly steady decline since mid-March.
- **Legal Issues:** If assurances about campus safety were one important benchmark for our ability to open the fall semester, another was the legality of international travel and study. On these two issues we have also seen definitive progress since our last communication. On the issue of access by U.S. citizens to the EU and Italy, the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs has recently issued a directive confirming that our students can enter and reside in Italy, as long as they enter [for educational reasons](#), are free of COVID, and agree to an initial 14-day quarantine restriction. Legal counsel for the [Association of College and University Programs in Italy](#), which represents the interests of over 150 study-abroad programs and over 30,000 visiting students, has evaluated this directive and confirmed that it amounts to a green light for the fall. On the issue of the feasibility study itself, Italy's Department of Education has recently announced that [schools will resume operations in September, with the official opening date set at September 14, 2020](#). The above developments give us sufficient assurances that neither the University nor its students and staff will face any legal obstacles to attending the Rome program in fall.

With both these safety and legal questions resolved, our planning for the fall will now proceed forward in earnest. That is to say, we can now begin to confirm and finalize any number of activities that we have planned on the semester calendar, including fieldtrips, religious retreats, and special events. Please see the updated semester calendar attached for your reference.

What remains in terms of planning are the following things: First, your final decision on whether to attend the fall 2020 Rome semester or not. Second, an outline of the safety measures that students and staff are required to accept and adhere to as a precondition for participating in the semester. And third, a reminder about our cancellation policies in case of an interrupted fall semester.

- **Final Decision Timetable and Details:** here is an updated list of deadlines for enrollment:
  - August 1: the \$795 Rome fee is now refundable until August 1, 2020.
  - August 7 : the group flight deposit amount of \$100, previously published as non-refundable after July 9, 2020, now refundable in full until ticketing (August 7, 2020).
  - August 7: the group-flight ticket is also refundable until August 7, 2020.
- **Anti-COVID Protocols for Campus Life:** here is a list of required logistical and safety measures as dictated either by Italian law, UD policy, or both:
  - **COVID-free Declaration:** Need to fill out obligatory [Italian Government Entrance Certificate](#), testifying to having neither tested positive for COVID nor been put in quarantine for COVID within the 14 days prior to arriving in Italy. We will provide you with a translation of this document so that you can present it upon arrival.
  - **COVID Screen Test:** Within one week of your arrival on campus you will be screen-tested for COVID (by means of a [serological test](#)) at the University's expense.
  - **Protective Masks:** Until further notice and possibly for the whole semester, protective masks must be worn at all times within all buildings without exception and outdoors when 6 ft. social-distancing is not feasible or likely (e.g. at parties). Single-use masks will be provided at the University expense at an expected rate of one new mask per day per student.
  - **Quarantine:** From the day of student arrivals on campus (September 13<sup>th</sup>) through day fourteen of the in-person semester (September 26<sup>th</sup>) students cannot leave campus for any reason except a health emergency.
  - **Social Distancing Regulations:** These include but are not limited to:
    - Assigned Walking Routes in and out of campus buildings
    - Assigned Seating in Classrooms
    - Assigned Seating on Busses
    - Table-Service in the Cafeteria
    - Limitations on Sporting and other Recreational Activities
    - More restrictive visitor policy within dorms
    - Social distancing (3 ft.) in Mass and during private prayer in the Chapel
    - Necessity of taking Holy Communion in the hand(s)
  - **COVID Emergency Measures (Individuals):** If a student or staff member (hereafter "patient") tests positive for COVID on campus, the following protocol will be observed:
    - The Rome Program will contact authorized Italian health and public-safety authorities and invite their assistance with the patient.

- If the patient requires hospitalization, the Rome Program will work with local officials to identify the best COVID-ready facility and organize transport there.
- The Rome Program will have no power to determine how long that hospital stay will last nor in all likelihood be in a position to advocate for the patient's right to an early dismissal, repatriation, more testing, access to visitors and an interpreter, a change of doctor and clinic, and the like.
- When the patient is released from the hospital, the Rome Program will act as mediator between the patient and hospital for paying bills, will transport patient back to campus, and will house the patient in a private room until the medical emergency has passed. In case the patient does not have immediate access to funds, the Rome Program can provide a limited, temporary, emergency loan to the patient to cover local medical expenses.
- **COVID Emergency Measures (Campus Community):** In case of an outbreak of COVID infections on campus, the Rome Program reserves the right to impose quarantines and curfews, cancel fieldtrips, limit independent travel, suspend classes or move to online classes, and in a worse scenario suspend the semester and repatriate students.
- **Vacation Travel Restrictions:** Students must agree to travel only to countries that have as good as, or a better, COVID-19 containment record as the EU and IT do. Trustworthy sources of information for such data can be found at either [ECDC](#) or [CDC](#) websites.
- **Off-Limits Travel Areas to All Rome Students:** In view of continuing concerns about the incidence of COVID in Lombardy (Italy), with Milan as its capital, we may reserve the right to prohibit student independent travel to this region. The same is true of other travel destinations in Italy, Europe and elsewhere in case of COVID outbreaks in those areas during the fall 2020 semester. Once again, trustworthy sources of information for such data can be found at either [ECDC](#) or [CDC](#) websites.
- **Fall Break Word of Caution:** On Thursday, October 1, 2020, in anticipation of the scheduled Fall Break a couple of weeks later (October 16-25), we will conduct a comprehensive and definitive assessment of the risks of COVID infection associated with travel in Europe. If that assessment concludes that student safety may be put at risk by independent travel, we reserve the right to suspend or postpone the Fall Break and make alternative plans, which could entail an accelerated class schedule or additional fieldtrips or a mix of both.
- **Fall Break Stay-On-Campus Option:** Students preferring to stay on campus for fall break can count on it being open and can choose to stay for a room and board charge of \$40 per day, for which they will receive accommodation, access to all facilities, a light continental breakfast and dinner.
- **Post Fall Break COVID Screen Test:** If concerns about the spread of COVID persist through the fall break, we reserve the right to screen-test students for COVID (by means of a [serological test](#)) upon return from fall break at the University's expense.
- **Pre- and Post-Semester Travel Beyond the 89-Day Fall Semester:** Students traveling for more than 90 days in the EU and Schengen areas do so at their own risk and with an understanding that neither UD Irving nor the Rome Program can offer guidance and advice on—or indeed take responsibility for—any problems encountered by students traveling to non-Schengen countries prior to or after the program. Students are advised to contact the embassies of their countries of interest to understand local tourist and visa regulations.

- **Cancellation Policies:**
  - **Student Refund for Services Not Rendered:** In the event of a cancelled or interrupted fall 2020 semester, students will not be entitled to any tuition refund as classes move online, but they will be refunded on a prorated basis for any refundable services not rendered, such as cafeteria meals and group trip fees for the faculty led trips to Greece and Northern Italy.
  - **Airfare Ticket Change Fees:** If the fall 2020 semester were to be cancelled prior to departure or if the semester were to be cancelled or interrupted after departure resulting in the need for an emergency repatriation, students will be responsible for any flight change fees and fare differences.

We hope that, upon review, you will find the above schedules, policies, and contingency plans reasonable and fair. A number of tradeoffs and a governing principle of caution are obviously written into our planning. If you can accept that approach for the good you see in it, then let me strongly urge students to complete the application process and join us in fall for what I am sure will be a wonderful semester. If you would prefer to delay, then my suggestion would be to consider the summer 2021 or even the fall 2021 Rome semester.

Before concluding, let me share three possible concerns—and share them honestly, transparently, and in good faith with you—regarding our decision to open the fall semester. These three issues fall into the category of "known unknowns" but nonetheless need to be factored into your decision-making process.

- **U.S. State Department Travel Alert:** The [U.S. State Department's](#) travel advisory for Italy has remained at "Level 3-Reconsider Non-Essential Travel" from February 29, 2020 to this very day. To the best of my knowledge, the State Department has not adequately explained to the public why it has maintained such high alert levels in countries that have successfully contained the COVID virus (whereas the U.S. has not), nor has it indicated when and according to what criteria this alert level will be revisited. To be clear, this is not a legal travel ban on travel to Italy. Rather it appears to be an invitation to U.S. citizens in general, and especially that category of U.S. citizen who may be most at risk of contracting a serious case of COVID—i.e. older adults and people with underlying medical conditions—to exercise caution in their international travel choices. Our hope—without having any say in the matter—is that the State Department will bring down the travel alert to "Level Two-Exercise Increased Caution" by the time the fall semester opens. In statements made on June 25, 2020, [Secretary of State Michael R. Pompeo](#) appeared to support more cooperation with Europe on critical issues of mutual concern rather than less. Be that as it may, in a certain sense the State Department has already signaled the decreasing risk of the disease and a greater level of engagement on its part by virtue of reopening the American Embassy and Consulate in Rome to the public as of two weeks ago after being closed in the previous three months.
- **Unforeseen Changes in the Incidence and Mapping of the COVID virus:** Although we all long for a return to the stable and predictable times of old, this expectation seems unrealistic until a universal vaccine for COVID is found and disseminated throughout the world. We are under no illusions that such a vaccine will be available to students and staff in time for the fall 2020 semester. So, once we accept the likelihood of living still for several months without a vaccine, we will need to be on guard for the possibility of changes to even our best well laid plans. Our planning for the fall semester is well founded in both logistic and probability terms. Still, if a new COVID outbreak takes place and is not contained in Italy and Europe successfully, then we will obviously need to adjust our existing plan of action in order to protect our community from harm. Anyone who comes to Rome needs to know that a new outbreak (or "second wave") is a possibility without

being a probability. By this measure Rome is no more safe or unsafe than just about anywhere else in the developed world, nor is it more or less susceptible to a swift and unannounced change of plans than anywhere else. We cannot even remotely control this variable as a factor in our planning. For this reason, we reserve the right to change our planning, even last minute, in response to a renewed international health emergency that would compromise the safety of the Rome Campus community.

- **Contracting COVID in Rome:** Students, their parents, and their friends and loved ones need to accept that contracting COVID is a possibility during the Rome semester. The Rome Campus has engaged a certified safety-in-the-workplace expert to help us identify and implement all necessary and reasonable anti-COVID measures. It also relies on UD Irving's well-founded policies. But even if we are confident in our ability to limit—to a significant degree—the risk of infection on campus, we are not in a position to monitor the lives of all of the people in our community 24/7 nor dictate each person's behavior outside of campus. Hence, there are some limitations in our ability to manage this health challenge, and as a result some level of risk is unavoidable and remains outside our absolute control. Despite performing due diligence in regard to keeping the campus free of COVID, therefore, the University of Dallas and its Rome Campus still cannot in absolute terms promise that a student will not contract COVID during his/her Rome semester nor will the University and its Rome Campus take legal responsibility if that unfortunate circumstance occurs. Parents and students acknowledge the risks they are taking by participating in the Rome program, assume full responsibility for these risks, and agree not to hold the University liable in the event that a student contracts the COVID virus while in the Rome program.

To field questions about these last issues, as well as any other questions and concerns you may have before making a final decision about the fall semester, let me invite you to a town-hall Zoom meeting this coming Saturday, July 11, at 10:00am CDT. I will attend this meeting to answer your questions, along with Mrs. Rebecca Davies (Director of Rome & Summer Programs) from the Irving Campus and Mr. Ben Gibbs (Director of Student Life) from the Rome Campus. Our goal in this meeting would be to give you all of the information available to us so that you, in turn, feel comfortable making a final decision about the fall semester.

Again the Zoom meeting is scheduled for Saturday, July 11, 10:00am CDT, link below.  
<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/82391045211>.

We will record this meeting and make it available to anyone upon request. Furthermore, if a follow up meeting is warranted either next week or as the semester approaches, we can do that as well.

If anything of concern comes up either in anticipation of the meeting or in the days and weeks to follow, please do write either me at [pbatlie@udallas.edu](mailto:pbatlie@udallas.edu) or Mrs. Davies at [bdavies@udallas.edu](mailto:bdavies@udallas.edu) if you have questions and concerns that you think I can address over the next couple of days.

Sincerely Yours,



---

Peter Hatlie, Dean, Director, VP, Prof. of Classics