



UNIVERSITY OF DALLAS

November 12, 2020

Dear Prospective Students, Parents, and Loved Ones of the Spring 2021 Rome Class,

Greetings from Rome on a lovely late-fall day here at the Due Santi Rome Campus. My name is Dr. Peter Hatlie, and in my capacity as Dean, Director, VP, and Professor of Classics at UD's acclaimed study abroad program, let me express how pleased we are that the spring 2021 semester is still on course to take place and furthermore that so many students are still committed to joining us.

In what follows, please find a discussion of recent news and planning updates at the Rome Program as it concludes its fall 2020 semester and begins its preparations for spring 2021.

SUMMARY OF THE FALL 2020 SEMESTER. Although the fall semester coincided with a powerful and dangerous second wave of COVID-19 in Europe and elsewhere, students and staff successfully adapted to the changing circumstances around them and, on balance, had a fruitful and meaningful educational experience.

- **Classes** were neither interrupted nor significantly disrupted during the semester. Two of our six professors delivered in person lectures for practically the whole semester, while others turned to a mix of online and in person classes. Given that we are blessed with a very strong and committed faculty in Rome, I am confident that students got a first-rate education.
- **Educational Travel** faced some challenges as favorite destinations such as Greece and the great cities of central and northern Italy limited access to student groups. A successful work-around for the Greece trip was found—a wonderful 10-day trip through Southern Italy (Monte Cassino, Sperlonga, Pompeii, Naples, Paestum) and Sicily (Taormina, Mt. Etna, Agrigento, Palermo). Later in the semester students were given the opportunity to travel on their own to the great cities of Assisi, Perugia, Florence, Siena, Pisa, Venice, and Padua as a substitution for our traditional Northern Italy Trip. UD Rome subsidized this travel and equipped students with on-site assignments for credit and extra-credit in their classes. Not all museums and churches were open in these historic locations but at least students were able to visit these amazing places.
- Our **Religious Life** program faced some inevitable disruptions to its normal activities this semester owing both to a series of COVID-19 restrictions placed upon liturgical services by the [Italian Congregation of Bishops](#) and to the unexpected illness of our senior and assistant chaplains. After a good start, the frequency of Mass and access to Confession was reduced for a number of weeks in the middle of the semester, but now we are returning to normal thanks to some help we received from a visiting priest and, now, the full return of our Senior Chaplain, Msgr. Thomas Fucinaro. As to highlights, students have attended events in the Vatican no fewer than three times this semester—for a post quarantine Mass at St. Peter's, the [Scavi Tours](#), and a recent visit to the Vatican Museums.
- **Independent Student Travel** arguably suffered the most disruption this semester. With COVID-19 cases spiking in Italy and across Europe during the months of September and October, the prospect of travelling to the destinations that students love most became simply impossible. Not only would destinations such as Barcelona, Paris, London,

Amsterdam, and Munich have posed a risk to student health, there was little chance that our students would have been able to cross borders into another EU-member country. As of the writing of this letter, there is absolutely no travel allowed between EU-countries for normal touristic travel.

- **Campus Life**, by contrast, flourished over the course of this semester. Our Office of Student Life sponsored multiple events to brighten up the dead time resulting from anti-COVID measures and encourage the building of community identity and cooperation. Outdoor movies, sporting events, and a marathon reading of Homer's *Odyssey* are among the events that drew large numbers of students and contributed to a great community spirit. Still to come this semester are events such as the talent show, a walk to Rome on the *Appia Antica*, and our final departure ceremonies and festivities. We always say that students make some of their best friends, indeed some of the best friends of their lives, in Rome. This semester is no exception.

LESSONS LEARNED FROM THE FALL 2020 "COVID" SEMESTER. We did it! We managed not only to be [one of the few study-abroad programs to bring students successfully to Italy](#) but also to fulfill the most important components of our promise and commitment to students and parents. And we did all of this despite the ever-growing challenges presented by COVID-19 during the very months in which students were residents on the Rome Campus. When we look forward to the spring 2021 semester, the following considerations are foremost in our mind as we consider not merely doing as well as we did in fall 2020 but indeed giving students an even more complete and fulfilling experience.

- **The COVID-19 Factor in Semester Planning.** When we approved the fall 2020 semester in late July 2020, the number of active cases in Italy had fallen to around 10,000 patients in total nationwide, the number of daily new cases stood in the low hundreds, and ICU capacity for COVID-19 patients was inching toward zero nationwide. Then came the [second wave](#), which between mid-August and today has increased the number of actively infected patients by 5000%, brought daily cases to levels that are consistently over 100 times greater than what they were in July, and filled up hospital beds and ICU units to near-saturation levels. Such a miscalculation of the danger of this virus for public health is now in full view in Europe in general and Italy in particular. We are gratified that, on one hand, we were successful in navigating these troubled waters of these recent months. We are hopeful, on the other that this most recent breakdown in the containment and management of COVID-19 will result in a better and safer outcome by the time the spring 2021 semester begins. The Italian government has passed fifteen executive orders about COVID-19 since mid-July, each more restrictive than before and the last of which amounts to a near-full lockdown of the country. The hope is to fully contain COVID-19 in Italy by Christmas and consolidate this campaign before the opening of schools again in early January. Since the same Italian government had success in combatting COVID-19 during the first wave, I am reasonably confident that combatting this second wave will be accomplished as well.
- **UD Rome Campus anti-COVID-19 Protocols Work.** With a combination of detailed advance planning, student education, and staff persistence and professionalism, the Rome Campus managed to create a healthy and safe educational and residential-life experience on campus in fall 2020. What we learned, though, is that guaranteeing health and safety requires that each campus resident take responsibility not only for his/her own well-being but also that of others. And consistency is key in maintaining our anti-COVID measures. [An outbreak of COVID-19 on campus in early October](#) was in some part the result of student inattentiveness or negligence. After

containing that outbreak, we have not had another one, in part because of increased measures to curtail negligent student conduct. Students hoping to study in Rome in spring 2021 will therefore need to come prepared to take the *Due Santi Pledge* of student conduct (see attached) seriously and be prepared to suffer setbacks if adherence to our safety measures grows lax. In short, the whole is only as good as the sum of its parts.

- **Students Don't Typically Get Sick from COVID-19.** The early-October COVID-19 outbreak on campus sent us into ten days of collective quarantine and disrupted our academic, religious, and student life activities significantly, but thankfully it did not result in a local community health crisis. On the contrary and consistent with [statistics about the impact of COVID-19 infections in the young](#), the impact of this outbreak was mild indeed. Only three of our twenty seven cases resulted in any symptoms whatsoever, and in all three cases these were very mild. No student was admitted to the hospital during the outbreak nor indeed did anyone require the intervention of a physician. Student infections did, however, put staff members at higher risk as well as potentially causing problems for our campus neighbors in local shops, restaurants, and services.
- **Assurance that the UD Rome Medical Support Services are Sound.** Even if neither students nor staff members became seriously ill as the result of a COVID-19 outbreak on campus this time, it is still absolutely necessary that UD Rome remains vigilant and prepared for the prospect of someone getting seriously ill in future. What we learned is that the local public health authority, called [ASL-SISP](#), is serious about protecting the public from harm and can be counted on to intervene and lend logistical support—as they did with us—in the case of an outbreak. Over the course of the semester we also strengthened our alliance with an important local hospital, [Salvator Mundi International Hospital](#), whose experts helped us with two rounds of testing on short notice and at a reasonable price.
- **Thank Goodness for Rome's Hardworking and Experienced Staff.** The twenty or so individuals who make up the faculty, staff, and service-providers of UD Rome worked incredibly hard and amazingly well together to prepare the campus for student arrivals and overcome challenges to our program's success during the course of the semester. These acts of kindness, professionalism, and sacrifice included finding reliable COVID-19 testing in a time when that was nearly impossible, getting meals and medicine and treats to quarantined students, adapting class days and times to fit changing circumstances, and opening up extra counselling hours for students in spiritual and emotional need. Many people on staff have not had a true day off for weeks and nonetheless are still battling to make our students' experience as safe and fulfilling as possible.

SOME IMPORTANT POINTS OF REFERENCE FOR SPRING 2021. If students are already packed and ready to come to Rome, we wish you all a Merry Christmas and look forward to your arrival in mid-January. If there are still questions and concerns, perhaps the following Q&A will begin to give a clearer picture of what to expect.

- **Semester Calendar:** Please review the draft semester calendar for spring 2021, noting that an initial 14-day period of quarantine as required by current Italian law (see more on that below) may be necessary, though it's still too early to tell.
- **In Person Classes:** Classes are scheduled to be in person and on ground. Classes will only move online in the event of a compromised health and safety environment.
- **Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs Authorization:** Just as was the case this semester, our students are authorized to enter and legally reside in Italy and the EU [for the purpose of study](#). As long as this authorization remains in place, the semester can go ahead as

planned. Our students immigration status will be made even stronger by virtue of the fact that they will be in possession of both a student visa issued by the Italian Consulate in Houston and a resident permit (for the purpose of study) upon arrival.

- **United States Department of State and CDC Authorization:** Just as was the case this semester, U.S. citizens are advised to travel to Italy under a [level-three \("Reconsider Travel"\) alert level](#). As long as this alert level remains at level-three or lower, the semester can go ahead as planned.
- **Due Santi Pledge:** Similar to Irving's [Groundhog Pledge](#), UD Rome will require all incoming students to commit themselves to a series of measures as a precondition for attending the in person phase of the Rome semester. Called the *Due Santi Pledge* (see attached) students must commit to a series of safety measures, including mask wearing and social distancing, aimed at keeping themselves and their fellow campus residents safe from harm. In addition, the *Pledge* requires that all students self-isolate in the 14 days leading up to their departure for Italy. Such self-isolation will need to include a commitment to staying at home and not interacting with people outside of the family unit.
- **Pre-Arrival COVID Testing:** We are requiring that all students take a diagnostic COVID-19 test within seven (7) days of their departure for Italy. It may be that the airlines will require a test within 72 hours of boarding. It will be important to prepare for both eventualities until requirements in January are clear. Either [a molecular/PCR or an antigen/Rapid test is sufficient](#), although the latter may be preferred given the fact that it is cheaper and can be processed quicker. In case of a positive result, we require that students communicate that result to the Irving Rome Office at udrome@udallas.edu. Failure to obtain and report the results of this test to the Irving Rome Office within two (2) days of departure may be grounds for suspension from the in person experience of the Program and refused admission to the Rome Campus upon arrival. In that event, students will continue to have the opportunity to finish their classes online.
- **Exception to Policy on Diagnostic Testing for Students with Past COVID Infection:** It is possible, if not probable, that some students will have already contracted and fortunately overcome the virus in the months leading up to their Rome semester. If this were to be the case, these students can expect to be COVID-free presently and thus, in principle, are eligible to attend the in person phase of the semester in Rome. I say "in principle" in view of the fact that health experts in the USA and Italy may not fully agree on risk factors in this regard, so one has to be careful not to underestimate the very cautious position of Italian health officials in this respect, because that is the opinion that counts at the moment. Students who believe that they have contracted COVID need to obtain a serological test demonstrating that they have developed antibodies to COVID-19. Alternatively, if it is the case that they are testing negative for antibodies but testing positive in a viral test, then these students need to obtain a detailed declaration from their doctor(s) documenting the diagnosis of COVID-19, complete with dates and any appropriate clinical information. My strong recommendation is that even students who have tested positive for antibodies through a serological test also bring a doctor's report.
- **Airport Arrivals** (Sunday, January 17): In accordance with quarantine rules, UD Rome will need to pick up all students at the airport at a given time and bring them to campus. Most students will be met by staff at the airport and come to campus by private bus, while others will need to use UD's exclusive taxi with staff help.
- **Fourteen Day Quarantine** (January 18-24): For the first fourteen days of the in person phase of the semester, students can expect to be quarantined on the UD Rome Campus under the following conditions:
 - Students cannot leave campus nor host outside visitors to campus.
 - Students will have to sign a form consenting to living in a two-person room and a

four-person suite; only in exceptional cases will students be granted the right to be assigned a single room.

- Students will have complete use of the campus grounds, including residence hall, library, soccer field, swimming pool, tennis and basketball court.
 - Students will have access to all normal internet services for their computers and smart phones.
 - Classes, Masses, and Public Assemblies will be held in areas where social distancing is possible.
 - Our cafeteria service will offer three meals per day as planned, and these services will be available in individually packaged format.
 - Students will have regular access to our Cappuccino Bar for coffee, tea, soft drinks and snacks, plus we will make grocery runs for special needs.
 - UD Rome's Office of Student Life will be organizing a regular variety of activities during quarantine period, including films, sports activities, good food and wine, and religious encounters.
 - Students will have access to external deliveries, including Amazon.it and several wine delivery companies, should they need to ship anything to campus.
 - Students will need to sanitize their bathrooms on a daily basis (using disposable wipes) and certify (by a signature) a wipe down of surface areas such as door knobs, faucets, toilet seats, etc.
- **Important! The Burden of Quarantine:** As defined by Italian law, quarantine consists of a trial period in which visitors in Italy demonstrate that they are free of the COVID virus. In our case at the UD Rome Campus, where we will be engaged in a collective, preventive quarantine (i.e. "a bubble"), that trial period extends to a group of visitors demonstrating as a group that they are free of the virus. In view of these guidelines, quarantine is expected to be 14 days long but may be extended if one or more individuals test positive for COVID and will last until the time when all UD students and staff under quarantine are demonstrably free of the disease for a period of 14 days. To be clear:
 - Possibility of a Minor Extension to Quarantine Period: In choosing to come to Rome, students and parents should take note of this particular application and dynamic of Italian national quarantine rules and understand and accept the possibility that in case of an incidence of COVID on campus during the quarantine period, the quarantine will be extended beyond 14 days. For example, if a student tests positive on day three (3) of the program, he or she will be isolated and the quarantine clock is automatically reset for the entire community to seventeen (17) days, or rather $14+3=17$ days.
 - Possibility of Major Extensions to Quarantine Period: In a worse case scenario, in which multiple students bring COVID to campus and through the neglect of social-distancing, handwashing, and mask-wearing rules, we come to face a "red zone" outbreak, we could face a longer quarantine time. Theoretically, in the unlikely but absolute worst case scenario, that quarantine period could be extended to the entire 109 days of the Rome program.
 - Likelihood of a COVID Outbreak on Campus?: Although the above two paragraphs describe the real steps UD Rome can and must take in order to keep its residents safe and at the same time abide by Italian anti-COVID laws that are designed to keep Italians safe, it goes without saying that by diligently following all of the safety protocols outlined in this and previous letters, students and staff have all of the tools and information necessary to reduce any risk of an outbreak significantly and indeed definitively. This is the COVID hand we have been dealt, and all things considered it is a strong hand, indeed a potentially winning hand. We

all should be encouraged by these opportunities before us and take them up as a challenge. Success or failure in this regard is therefore within our own power to determine and essentially a matter of choice, will, and the conscientious application of campus guidelines.

- **Isolation on Campus vs. Isolation in Hospital Concerns:** Parents and students are reminded that, should a student test positive for COVID, UD Rome will notify local health officials for help in dealing with the case. If his/her symptoms are determined to be minor, the student will reside in an isolated area on campus. If the student's symptoms are determined to be major to the point of compromising health, he/she will be moved to a local COVID hospital for recovery. The student will not be able to return to the United States unless the student is healthy enough to travel, i.e. unless the student is COVID-free.
- **Post-Quarantine Semester** (January 25 – May 5). Classes, Masses, public assemblies, and our cafeteria services now return to their proper time and place at this point. In this post-quarantine phase, students will both have the run of the campus and be allowed to come and go as they wish, travel freely, and enjoy their Rome semester. The *Due Santi Pledge* will remain in force, however, including the use of masks for indoors spaces, social distancing in both the indoors and outdoors, and limitations on visitor policies.

RISKS AND CONTINGENCY PLANS: Our policy in fall 2020 was to make campus health and safety our highest priority. That policy will continue unchanged into spring 2021 and beyond, first because it is the right thing to do, and second because it is the lynchpin of all of our other aspirations in Rome in academic, religious, and student-life terms. Keeping this perspective in mind, students, their parents, and their loved-ones are advised to read the following warnings and notices with attention:

- **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 spring 2021 semester and cannot be sure that it would be available to the general public by the end of the semester either. 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 spring 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 in Europe a "third wave") is a possibility, without of course 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

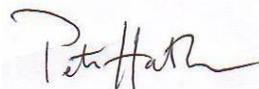
control. Despite performing due diligence in regard to keeping the campus free of COVID, therefore, the University of Dallas and its Rome Campus still cannot in absolute terms promise that a student will not contract COVID during his/her Rome semester nor will the University and its Rome Campus take 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.

- **Cancellation Policies:** In the unfortunate event that, for reasons beyond its control, UD Rome decides to cancel or suspend the in person phase of the semester, the following guidelines apply:
 - Student Refund for Services Not Rendered: In the event of a cancelled or interrupted spring 2021 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 spring 2021 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.
 - Finishing Rome Classes: If the Rome-Program classes are already well in session when the Program is suspended or cancelled, it will not be possible for students to return to live classes in Irving. They will complete their Rome courses virtually with their Rome professors giving online classes. If the Program is cancelled prior to the opening date of the semester, our Irving campus will do everything in its power to open up space in Irving classes and dorms.

In the introduction to this letter, I mentioned the fine weather we are having this fall in Rome. To repeat another welcome development of late, the morale and spirit of our students is impressively high right now, with many celebrating the victories—small and large—that they have experienced despite the complications and uncertainties created by COVID-19. One last piece of recent—indeed breaking—news is this: just in the last two days the curve of new COVID-19 cases appears to be flattening out once again in Italy. If this trend continues into the days and weeks to come, as it may, we will be very happy indeed.

I hope that the above letter, although long and detailed, has given you a useful update of our current state of affairs and a roadmap forward. I don't expect all questions to have been answered in this communication and therefore await further questions and constructive advice in the days and weeks to come. If you have something to contribute or need clarification on some point, please do not hesitate to write either me at phatlie@udallas.edu or Mrs. Davies, our Director of Rome and Summer Programs in Irving, at bdavies@udallas.edu.

Sincerely Yours,



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