



## UNIVERSITY OF DALLAS

July 6, 2021

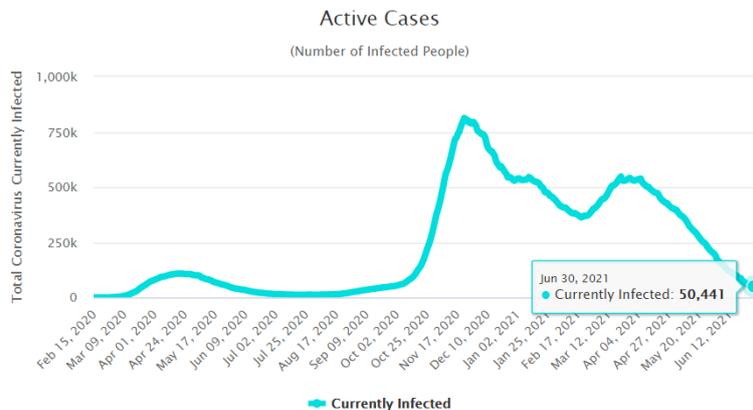
Dear Prospective Students and Families of the Fall 2021 Rome semester,

Greetings from the Eugene Constantin Due Santi Rome Campus! My name is Peter Hatlie, and I am the Dean, Director, VP, and Professor of Classics here in Rome. I hope that this letter finds you in good health and good spirits, wherever you may be this summer. For your information, it's been a lovely summer so far here in Italy—great weather, an improving COVID-19 environment, and lots of hope and positive energy for the future.

The purpose of this letter is, first, to give you a midsummer's update about the COVID-19 situation here in Italy and the EU, then to discuss an essential planning issue—to vaccinate or not to vaccinate?—, and finally to clarify a number of COVID-relevant policies.

### CURRENT COVID-19 NUMBERS IN ITALY

As you can see from the graph below the number of active COVID-19 cases in Italy has been in steady decline since its peak toward the end of last year (2020) and since a relatively minor third wave that occurred in March and April (2021).



In a population of approximately 60 million people, just over 50,000 are currently infected, with an infection rate of .09%, similar to that of the U.S. At the same time (source: [Worldometer](#)), daily deaths have mercifully decreased to double-digit figures, hospitalizations and ICU occupancy numbers have plummeted, and daily new cases are now on average below 1,000 per day as compared to averages of 40,000-50,000 just months ago. All of this is fantastic news for residents of Italy and tourists. To make matters even brighter, a longstanding outdoor masking requirement has just been lifted, restaurants and bars are open, curfews have been lifted, the tourist season is off to a strong start, and the Italian national soccer team is on course to do well in this year's [European Championship Tournament](#). Not surprisingly, then, there is a general feeling of relief and optimism in the air right now. Furthermore, over 50% of the Italian population has received one vaccination shot while over 30% are fully vaccinated, leaving Italy approximately two months away from herd immunity (predicted to occur by early September) and putting it in a favorable position to defend itself successfully against the now-worrisome [delta variant](#).

### **SUCCESS OF THE SUMMER 2021 ROME SEMESTER**

As of the writing of this letter, our summer students have just begun the seventh week of their semester. So far they have visited St. Peter's Basilica, travelled to historic cities of Assisi, Florence, Padua and Venice, experienced some wonderful on-campus and off-campus meals, walked the Appia Antica and visited the Roman catacombs, and are now just finishing up their ten-day Greece trip. Thankfully, their semester has been free of accidents, illness, and COVID-19 lockdowns. This news in itself is remarkable given the difficulties of the last year and a half! Final exams for the first session of the summer semester will take place later this week, followed by a midsummer's vacation and session two in July and early August. All things considered, the summer semester has not only surpassed all expectations but also raised expectations for a wonderful fall semester.

### **VACCINATION ADVICE FOR FALL 2021 SEMESTER STUDENTS AND FAMILIES**

Given the improved and improving health and safety environment in Italy and Europe there is every reason to expect that we will host the fall 2021 without most (if any) of the obstacles and setbacks that we experienced in the prior three "COVID" semesters, when the pandemic forced us in varying degrees to modify and sometimes even scale back our programs. As we look forward to fall 2021, therefore, we hope to return to the high aspirations and known strengths of the Rome Program. Essentially, we want to give participants the full range of activities that they want and deserve, including in-person classes, all of our valuable educational trips, all of our fantastic religious-life and student-life opportunities, and last but not least, plenty of free time for independent travel in Italy and beyond.

In order to make the above scenario possible, we hope and pray that Italy, Greece and the rest of Europe overcome the current worries about the delta variant and stay on course toward a full recovery from the COVID-19 epidemic. Furthermore, we in Rome intend to continue ahead with placing the health and well-being of all students and staff as our highest priority, just as we have done in the even more challenging moments of recent past semesters. In addition, just as we have done in the past, we will again in the fall follow the guidance of Italian law in all matters regarding COVID-19.

In regard to Italy's COVID-19 policies, we will learn much more about the roadmap ahead on or before July 31, 2021, at which time the current government will decide whether or not to extend the country's longstanding [state of emergency](#). If the state of emergency is extended, a series of anti-COVID-19 policies such as masking (indoors), social-distancing, and curfews will no doubt remain in place. If the state of emergency is lifted, we can be confident that the worst is over and will breathe a deep sigh of relief that many if not all of our former liberties will return. Of the two options outlined above, my guess is that the state of emergency will officially continue, albeit on a reduced scale and thus with much less impact on our daily life than we've experienced to date. One of the reasons the emergency may not go away completely or soon has to do with Italy's membership in the large and complex world of the European Union, where COVID-19 policy has tended to develop slowly and cautiously in order to accommodate the different realities of member states.

Whatever new policies may be announced in the coming weeks, it remains a fact of life that the EU and its member-partner Italy strongly support [vaccinations](#) as Europe's best hope for emerging from the COVID-19 crisis. For months now, Italians have been urged to obtain vaccinations in order to qualify for the so-called [Green "Immunity" Certificate](#), thus allowing them free movement throughout Italy and Europe. State of emergency or not, it is all but certain that this pro-vax policy will remain in place as we begin the fall semester, both for EU residents and visitors. See [this current U.S. State Department guidance](#) for U.S. citizens intending to visit Italy, noting the following important language:

- *Beginning on June 21 and valid until July 30, 2021, a Covid document compliant with Italian and EU regulations commonly called the "Green Pass" will allow travelers from the United States to enter Italy without having to self-isolate/quarantine upon arrival and undergo testing after quarantine. Passengers are still required to complete the online [digital Passenger Locator Form](#).*

- *In order to qualify for a “Green Pass”, U.S. citizens must provide certification issued by a U.S. authority certifying ONE of the following requirements:*
  - *Anti-Covid 19 vaccination certificate of one of the vaccinations recognized by the [European Medicines Agency](#) (EMA) and that is Pfizer-BioNtech, Moderna, Johnson and Johnson, and AstraZeneca. The date of the final vaccine dose must be at least 14 days prior to travel. Approved languages of the certificate are Italian, English, Spanish, and French. The certificate can be in digital or paper format. Travelers vaccinated in the United States can prove this via the “white card” bearing the CDC logo.*
  - *A medical certificate confirming recovery from COVID dated no more than 6 months before departure.*
  - *A negative molecular PCR or rapid antigen test result carried out within 48 hours of departure.*
- *For additional information on travel to and from Italy, please see: <https://www.esteri.it/mae/it>.*

As stated above, the likelihood of these requirements staying in place beyond July 31, 2021 is great. Consequently, all participants of the fall 2021 are advised to be pro-active in securing either the required vaccinations or required testing in anticipation of their departure for Rome.

Regarding this last point—the question of whether to vaccinate or not vaccinate—with this letter I would encourage all Rome Program participants who are not already COVID-19 immune to seek an approved anti-COVID vaccination prior to attending the fall semester as your single best defense against getting sick, getting someone else sick, suffering financial loss due to sickness and extra-testing, and/or facing obstacles to your ability to travel freely for lack of proof of immunity. Note that the above guidance does not constitute a vaccine mandate by the University of Dallas and its Rome Program. Rather, I am sharing guidance that I believe will provide the best possibility for a successful fall Rome semester. If the success of summer 2021 semester is any guide, the fact that all but a few of our 28 summer students came to Rome with natural or vaccinated immunity and thereupon suffered no setbacks whatsoever is telling.

#### **RISKS AND CONTINGENCY PLANS**

Our policy in past "COVID semesters" was to make campus health and safety our highest priority. That policy will continue unchanged into fall 2021 and beyond, first because it is the right thing to do, and second because it is the cornerstone 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:

- **Possible Program Changes Owing to the COVID-19 virus:** Although we all long for a return to the stable and predictable times of old, this expectation seems unrealistic until every last trace of COVID-19 is erased worldwide. That will not happen anytime soon, as we all know, not in the next several months certainly and perhaps not for some years to come. All Rome participants therefore need to acknowledge that a new outbreak of COVID-19 in Italy and elsewhere is a possibility, without of course being a probability. Given this possibility, 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 still 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. As noted above, we have also not mandated vaccinations for Rome participants. 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.

#### **REIMBURSEMENT POLICY**

If the University must terminate the program prior to the scheduled end of the semester, or if a COVID-19 lockdown of four or more weeks is mandated by a governmental entity, public health agency, or local, national or international health organization, the University will prorate room and board for students who return home. Tuition, travel-related, and all other expenses will not be reimbursed.

In all other instances, the Rome Program will follow the written reimbursement policy as stated in the University Bulletin below:

“If a student is terminated, voluntarily (requires written permission from the Dean of Constantin College) or involuntarily from participation in the Rome Program prior to the end of the term for which the student is enrolled in the Rome Program, the student shall be liable for all expenses incurred in connection with such termination. The student shall not be entitled to any refunds for tuition, room and board, or travel expenses (unless and to the extent that the student is eligible to receive a refund for tuition and fees according to university policy as stated in General Bulletin, or that the student or the university is eligible to receive a refund from a third party in connection with such travel expenses.”)

#### **NEXT STEPS**

See a draft version of our semester calendar attached. We will update this calendar periodically within the coming weeks and share it with you as we populate it with more details and confirmed events. We will also of course write you again in the unlikely event of some extraordinary news—good or bad—about our planning for the fall. For now, let me just ask you to "Save the Date" of 12:00pm (Dallas Time) on Friday, August 6, 2021 for a town-hall zoom meeting for last-minute updates and questions. The link for that meeting is: <https://zoom.us/j/99701963065>. Speaking for all of our faculty and staff, let me assure you that we are excited by the prospect of hosting you here in Rome this fall and sharing with you all of the amazing things this part of the world has to offer. We hope you feel the same.

If you have questions about any aspect of this letter or any more general questions, please contact Rebecca Davies, the Director of the Rome Office in Irving by phone at 972-721-5206 or email at [bdavies@udallas.edu](mailto:bdavies@udallas.edu). If you prefer to contact me on the Rome Campus, I will respond promptly to email delivered to [phatlie@udallas.edu](mailto:phatlie@udallas.edu) and will be happy to follow up with a call too.

Sincerely Yours,



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