



## UNIVERSITY OF DALLAS

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October 19, 2020

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

I am writing you with the unfortunate news that we suddenly have a significant outbreak of COVID-19 on the Rome Campus. A molecular test that was administered by local health officials on the afternoon of Sunday, October 18, the results of which we received late this afternoon, determined that fifty-two (52) students of our seventy eight (78) students have tested positive for COVID-19. Adding this number to that of a number of positives earlier in the week, that leaves us with sixty-one (61) total positive individuals on campus to date. Only three students are currently experiencing COVID-19 symptoms, however, all mild.

While it is too early to answer all of the questions about the origins of this outbreak and the roadmap ahead over the next two weeks to a month, let me offer in what follows both a timetable of events on campus, an educated guess as to the period of our exposure to the virus, and a summary of next immediate steps:

### Timetable of activities in the fall 2020 to date:

- **No COVID-19 Infections on Campus (Thursday, September 17, 2020):** After student arrivals on Sunday, September 13, we proceeded ahead with a viral antigen test of the whole group five (5) days later. There were zero positive test results. All students were COVID-19 clean at this point.
- **End of Quarantine on Sunday (September 27, 2020):** Students observed a collective quarantine on campus through Saturday, September 26, 2020, then were free to leave campus and shop at local markets, travel back and forth to Rome, and explore their surroundings.
- **One Week of Classes and Free Time (September 27-October 2, 2020):** During this week between the end of quarantine and our departure for the first extended fieldtrip, students were free to come and go from campus. To ensure their safety and encourage continued compliance with known safety measures, Rome staff scheduled events in Rome and on campus with staff in attendance. One sponsored event and one self-guided class meeting took place in Rome during that week too, the first a visit to St. Peter's Basilica and the second a self-guided class trip to the Basilica of St. Mary Major.
- **Trip to Southern Italy and Sicily (October 2 -11, 2020):** A substitute for the Greece Trip, this extended fieldtrip took us to nine different cities and included museum and outdoor site visits, city tours, free-time on the beach and free-time in the mountains, and a boat trip on the way home.
- **First Sign of Possible COVID Infections (October 10, 2020):** Toward the end of this trip, namely on the boat trip on Saturday, October 10, 2020 at 9:00pm local time, one student came forward describing a loss of smell and/or taste but he/she had no fever. On the following day, Sunday, October 11, 2020 at 11:00am local time, another four students came forward reporting a loss of smell/taste, one of whom had a minor fever of 100 F.. Toward the end of that very same day one additional student came forward with similar symptoms, bringing the total number of suspected student cases to six (6).

### Timetable of UD Rome Program Initial Responses to Suspected COVID-19 Outbreak:

- **Initial Test for Students with COVID-19 Symptoms:** By 2:00 pm on the afternoon of Monday, October 12, all six (6) students were tested at a local, private clinic for COVID-19. By the end of

the same day, three (3) had tested positive and three (3) negative. The three positive individuals were immediately put into self-isolation from the rest of the community, likewise for their roommates.

- **Intervention of Local Health Authority (Wednesday, October 15, 2020 – Thursday, October 16, 2020):** The local authority administered additional tests on the three positive individuals and determined that they were all positive.
- **Organization of Campus-Wide Test:** Local health authorities responded to our calls for a mass testing on campus only Sunday, October 18, 2020. Private clinics contacted in the interval were not available for tests owing to the increased incidence of COVID-19 in Italy currently and the pressure it has put on both private and public health providers.
- **Mass Testing of Campus Residents (Sunday, October 18, 2020) and Results (Monday, October 19, 2020):** All students and ten staff members were tested at 4:00pm on Sunday, October 18, 2020 for COVID-19. Late today, 6:30pm local time, we learned that fifty-two of these students have tested positive.
- **Asymptomatic COVID Outbreak:** With the few known exceptions cited above, the current outbreak of COVID-19 on the Rome campus appears to be in large part asymptomatic. That is, the fifty two (52) individuals who tested positive today all appear to be in good and stable health. In the coming days, we will interview all infected students to understand better the current state of their health, and we remain on standby should any student need to report symptoms immediately.

#### Current and Next Steps on the Rome Campus:

- **Daily Fever and Oxygen-Intake Readings:** With the exception of the three students placed in isolation with positive COVID already, no student on campus has been measured this week either with a fever (above 98.6 F) or low (below 96%) oxygen levels. We will continue these readings on a daily basis
- **Reorganization of Dorm Accommodations:** The local Italian health authorities have ordered us to isolate positive COVID cases from individuals who tested negative. Effective 11:00pm this evening, we will move ahead with phase one of this plan, moving positive students into rooms with other positive students, while leaving negative individuals in the company of other negatives. By tomorrow we will be in a position to have two floors of our dormitory housing only positive individuals and a third reserved for negative individuals.
- **Ten-Day Quarantine Observance:** The local health authorities have ordered our campus into collective quarantine for the period of ten days, after which testing will be done again. Even students with negative results are required to quarantine until they too can be tested.
- **Activities on Campus—Rescheduled and Recalibrated:** During the next ten days, the plan is to continue with online classes, suspend in-person religious services, serve meals in individual prepared servings delivered to students rooms, allow students recreational time outside of their rooms and outdoors (alternating access of negative and positive individuals to public areas), suspend social gatherings outside of rooms, and require mask-wearing both indoors and outdoors. These policies will be updated in response to changing conditions and guidance from the local health authority.
- **Emergency COVID Medical Services:** Although all but a handful of our campus residents have either tested negative for COVID-19 or tested positive but without symptoms, we are prepared to respond pro-actively and aggressively on behalf of any individual experiencing severe COVID-19 symptoms. Several good hospitals nearby are well-equipped to treat COVID-19 patients.
- **Intermediary Non-Emergency Medical Attention:** During this period of quarantine, individuals will not have direct access to routine medical care. If such cases should appear and be deemed sufficiently serious, e.g. a broken bone or strep throat, we will contact local health officials and organize a direct hospital visit through them. For less urgent intermediary non-emergency

medical attention, we encourage students and parents to contact their own doctors and obtain a prescription, which we can fill at a local pharmacy.

It is with deep sadness and disappointment that I report this news to you. Rest assured that we will do everything in our power—in cooperation with local health officials—to contain any further spread of COVID-19 on campus, to monitor the health of and find medical support as necessary for infected individuals, and to emerge from this crisis as soon as possible.

For your questions and concerns, please do not hesitate to write either me at [phatlie@udallas.edu](mailto:phatlie@udallas.edu) or Mrs. Davies at [bdavies@udallas.edu](mailto:bdavies@udallas.edu).

Sincerely Yours,



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