



UNIVERSITY OF DALLAS

January 29, 2021

Dear Students, Parents, and Guardians of the Spring 2021 Rome Class,

Greetings from Rome! As I write you, our newly arrived Rome class is just finishing its second week of classes and settling into campus. As far as I can tell, spirits are strong and hopeful among our fifty-seven registered students despite the challenges of COVID-19 that surround both us and so many other people around the globe. With this letter I want to give you an update about activities on campus, then speak about some particular issues about campus life itself.

UPDATE—JANUARY 17 – JANUARY 29, 2020

As you may have heard, we all received a surprise from the Italian government in the days prior to students' departure for Rome. In an [executive order dated to January 14, 2021](#), we were pleased to learn that the country would fully open up to travel effective February 15, 2021 and furthermore museums would open up again immediately. These freedoms were granted to any of twenty *regioni* (or provinces) that had earned and maintained its "yellow" (moderate) COVID-19 risk ranking over the previous fourteen days. Our own region of Lazio had earned and kept that ranking for all of the previous ten months, and so we felt good about our place in the admittedly still-complex COVID-19 world. Then came the bad news. Just one day prior to student departures, Italy's Ministry of Health issued an [executive order dated to January 16, 2020](#), elevating our risk level from "yellow" (moderate) to "orange" (high), and with that we not only saw museums, restaurants and bars close their doors but were additionally required to remain in our municipality. Even Rome was now off-limits for the next fourteen days except, as the order indicated, for "necessary purposes." Regrettably, this was practically the first piece of news I needed to communicate to students on the very day of their arrival to campus.

We have regrouped and rallied since these disappointments of those first days. Further study of these recent executive orders in light of some essential liberties guaranteed by the [Italian Constitution of 1948](#) and acknowledged in previous COVID-19 executive orders led us to conclude that "necessary purposes" could be interpreted to include exercising one's right to study, to worship, and to get proper physical recreation, even outside of our municipality and indeed in the city of Rome. We have since made two fieldtrips to Rome for the purpose of celebrating Mass in Rome's majestic churches, among them the [Basilica of the Holy Cross of Jerusalem](#). We have also temporarily moved one of our classes—the *Western Theological Tradition* class taught by Dr. Ron Rombs—down to a university in Rome, [The Pontifical University of St. Thomas Aquinas "Angelicum"](#), so that students can witness to the faith and learn about the history, doctrine, and discipline of the Church in the very place it came to be. Finally, tomorrow we will take a pilgrimage and recreational walk along the Appian Way as far as the [Basilica of San Sebastiano](#), one of Rome's most historic and sacred churches.

While all of the above has been playing out, students have been eating well, studying hard, settling into our beautiful campus, and getting to know one another. We've experienced our first [wine-tasting](#) event last Saturday and have a Roman-delights feast planned for this coming Saturday. All in all, it's been a fun and edifying first couple of weeks.

The Eugene Constantine Rome Campus

Via dei Ceraseti, 12 | 00047 Marino (RM), Italy | Email: udallas@udrome.it | Tel. +39 06/9354-8441 | Fax: +39 06/9354.6079

The looming question for us all is how long the "orange" (high) risk category will remain. Just a few hours ago, in fact, the government declared that all but a few Italian provinces would return to "yellow" (moderate risk), and we in Lazio are one of them. That means that as of Sunday, January 31, bars and restaurants will reopen for service until 6:00pm, museums will reopen their doors to the public, and no limits on our travel within the province of Lazio, except for a general 10:00pm curfew, will be in effect. This is good news for us. We also hope that it lasts—i.e. that the new COVID-19 infection numbers continue to go downward in all of Italy in general and our area in particular, allowing for a slow return to normalcy in the weeks and months to come.

SOME IMPORTANT INFORMATION ABOUT CAMPUS LIFE

Besides offering the above update, I also want to use this opportunity to share some information and recommendations about safety on campus, in our local neighborhood, and then more generally in both Italy and Europe. Among the basic preconditions for having a great semester is, of course, the imperative of securing the safety of our students and staff. We have already hosted talks with students—one for men and another for women—about how they might be pro-active about safeguarding their personal safety while travelling off campus, and notably the challenge of setting boundaries between themselves and possible offenders and predators in bars, on public transport, while walking around big cities, and the like. At our next meeting with students, scheduled for Monday, February 1, we will broaden that discussion to address other possible risks to their safety and security.

In what follows, allow me to review the three main topics of that meeting: first, accessing credible information or “Staying Informed;” second, the range of measures we have taken to secure our students’ and staff’s well-being, or “Institutional Risk Management;” and third, encouraging students to raise their own awareness of the risks around them, or “Personal Risk Management.”

I: STAYING INFORMED

Keeping ourselves informed about potential risks to safety and security must be one of our first priorities. To that end, I and other administrators on the Rome Campus routinely consult the following sites for information and as necessary announce and discuss them publicly with our community.

[Alerts and Warnings \(USA\)](#)
[Foreign Travel Advice \(United Kingdom\)](#)
[Travel Advice and Advisories \(Canada\)](#)
[Travel Advice \(Republic of Ireland\)](#)

Starting with me, UD Rome’s administration regularly monitors these and other reports about terrorist risks, and we encourage students, parents or guardians, and concerned friends of the University to inform us of any credible threats that we may not be aware of.

II: INSTITUTIONAL RISK MANAGEMENT

In what follows, allow me to outline some of the resources we have at hand and explain what immediate steps we are taking to keep our community as safe as possible:

- **Experienced Local UD Rome Staff:** Some of our faculty and staff, including me personally, have been through Sept. 11th and later terrorist scares with previous Rome students. Emergency planning based on our previous experience will serve us well if emergency

situations develop in the future. Several staff members are competent in both the English and Italian language, enabling us to turn to local resources in case of need.

- **Local Police:** Two types of police—the military-based *Carabinieri* and the civilian-based *Polizia*—are both present and active in our area. Their police stations are just minutes from campus, and we are in close contact with them. We work with the police all of the time, know the officers by name, and have their cell phone numbers in case of emergencies.
- **The United States Embassy and Consulate:** I am a Warden of the U.S. Embassy in Italy, meaning that I am on the top of the list to be contacted by phone and email in case of a national or int'l emergency and have special access to the resources of the U.S. government in case of emergencies.
- **The United States Armed Forces:** The U.S. government and NATO have numerous military installations in Italy, with U.S. armed forces actively present, notably the Aviano Airbase in Pordenone, Italy. In case of serious unrest in Italy, we are confident that these institutions are aware of our presence and will respond decisively.
- **The AACUPI Association of U.S. Colleges and Universities:** UD Rome is part of this association of 80 U.S. colleges and universities abroad, representing the interests of approximately 30,000 students annually. *ACCUPI* has regular, formal ties with Italy's major government agencies and ministries as a source of further local and national information and support. *ACCUPI* has also recently developed an internal early warning protocol that we adhere to.
- **Italian Law Enforcement in General:** Italy has a history of fighting terrorism going back to the 1960s “red-brigade” troubles. Italian law gives broad power to law enforcement to search, seize and arrest in this regard, and Italian law enforcement officials generally speaking are highly skilled in this area. The same law-enforcement apparatus is responsible for COVID-19 policy enforcement.
- **Video Surveillance on Campus:** UD Rome has video cameras in the vicinity of the two main gates into campus. These cameras have both viewing and recording ability, the latter in case of an incident that needs to be reviewed later by us or police.
- **Visitor Screening:** UD Rome requires all visitors, vendors, couriers and temporary workers on campus to be identified before entering, and in case of those intending to spend more than 15 minutes on campus to check in at the Business Office and be issued a bright yellow visitors badge.
- **Facebook “Safety Check”:** Students will be reminded of an important first-alert function provided by Facebook. To learn more about this function see [Facebook Safety Check/Crisis Response](#).
- **Updated Contact Information:** UD Irving has already collected all student, parent and guardian contact information, including email accounts and cell phone numbers. Upon student arrivals, we confirmed this information. We also, on a regular basis, require students to inform us of their weekend and Spring Break travel plans, including hotel names, so that we can reach them in case of an emergency.
- **Emergency Contact Cards:** All Rome students are issued credit-card size emergency information cards, which facilitate calling UD Rome administrators 24/7 in case of an emergency.

III: PERSONAL RISK MANAGEMENT

The following is a list of measures and strategies by which students can develop a proactive stance toward their own safety and security, notably when they are off campus and thus without staff support:

- stay informed about **current world events and terrorist threats** via social media, news sites, government sites, etc.
- register in the U.S. gov't [Smart Traveler Enrollment Program \(STEP\)](#) asap to obtain updated breaking news about int'l safety and security.
- avoid **dressing** in an American fashion or otherwise drawing attention to oneself as a U.S. citizen.
- avoid **drinking** to the extent that decision-making and physical fitness are impaired.
- carry **UD emergency contact cards** at all times and contact UD Rome officials (24/7) in case of an emergency.
- reconfirm **cell phone numbers** and **email addresses** on file for emergency contact purposes.
- carry **US passport and IT immigration papers** on person at all times.
- practice the **buddy system** and not go off alone, especially in urban areas, in bars and generally at night.
- identify **emergency exits** in all locales.
- identify **safe havens** in all locales, including police offices, embassies, luxury hotels, and USO centers, such as the one located near the Vatican in Rome (Via Vespasiano, 44, GPS Coordinates: N 41° 54.43' EO 12° 27.498').
- avoid **large public gatherings** that may be at risk for terrorist attacks and/or are vulnerable in safety and security terms.
- carry an Italian (or other foreign language) **phrase book** or hand-held translator with you. There is a [good selection of foreign language phrasebook apps out there](#) to choose from.

With the above review of our perspectives, approaches and policies on safety and security at UD Rome complete, let me reiterate that that student and staff safety is indeed our very highest priority. As circumstances evolve and if security information changes, we will adjust our planning as necessary to account for any new concerns.

The threat of COVID-19 student and staff health deserves a special note in this respect. Our home campus in the U.S. has developed an impressive [COVID-19 Action-Plan](#) whose protocols and contingency plans we adhere to in Rome as well. That plan worked extremely well in fall 2020, both for Irving and UD Rome, and has been refined to the extent necessary for spring 2021. As for UD Rome in particular, you should know the following about our local resources, protocols and guidelines:

- **Protective Masks:** We have a large supply in stock and have ready access to more as necessary. Students should change their masks at least once a day for maximum protection and comfort.
- **Personal Hygiene Campaign:** Students are advised to wash their hands regularly with soap and use the various public hand-sanitizer stations we have around campus. We also urge students not to share eating utensils, drinking glasses, toothbrushes, protective masks, cigarettes, and the like. Students are also advised that physical contact is one main way by which viruses are spread.
- **Avoiding a Break-Out On Campus:** Students are urged to report any fever or cold-like symptoms to our Office of Student Affairs, and they are vigorously urged to report any COVID-19 symptoms as well, so that we can get them tested for COVID-19 as soon as possible. In the worse scenario of a COVID-positive diagnosis, students will need to self-

The University of Dallas – Eugene Constantine Rome Campus

isolate for ten (10) days and then test negative for the virus before being released from quarantine. In the best scenario, a student will go into temporary quarantine until a rapid test—usually available within twenty four (24) hours—returns a negative result. If a student receives an inconclusive rapid test then we will move ahead with a molecular PCR test.

- **Access To Doctors:** We have a doctor scheduled to come to campus almost every Monday. As you may know, we also have access to emergency medical services 24/7, 365 days a year.

We hope that this letter reassures you that our spring 2021 semester is off to a positive start. Furthermore, by familiarizing yourself with our campus resources and policies, we hope that you are reassured on safety and security issues as well.

If you have any general questions related to planning or safety risks, Rebecca Davies, the Director of the Rome Office in Irving, is well acquainted with Rome-Campus emergency policies and can be reached at 972-721-5206 or by email us at bdavies@udallas.edu. If you need to reach me on the Rome Campus, I will respond promptly to email delivered to me at phatlie@udallas.edu. If either Mrs. Davies or I am not available, please contact our Director of Student Affairs, Mr. Ben Gibbs, at bgibbs@udallas.edu.

Sincerely Yours,



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