

Dickinson

Spring 2025



Bologna team: Ellen, Elena Giulia, Luca and Bruno

Message from the Bologna Team

Ciao a tutti!

Momentum is building toward Dickinson's 60th Anniversary Celebration of the Bologna programs. Over several days in early October 2025, Dickinsonians and their families and friends will meet in Bologna for creative, small-group activities and festive gatherings to mark six wonderful decades of the remarkable study abroad program that started it all: Bologna.

Prof. Bob Nilsson launched Dickinson's Bologna program in 1965 with 16 students. That first semester, Prof. Nilsson and his wife, Judy Nilsson, who taught Italian at Dickinson, set the stage for the innovative and experiential learning that still defines Dickinson's two programs in Bologna, European Studies and Italian Studies. So many wonderful Bologna experiences have played out during the 60 years since its founding. We would wager that every reader of this newsletter has stories to tell about lasting lessons or deep discoveries that they brought home from Bologna. *What are yours?*

We truly hope that you'll return to Bologna anytime during the week of October 6–10, 2025, to join us and your fellow Bologna alumni to celebrate six decades of unmatched exploration and discovery offered every semester through Dickinson's Bologna programs. The registration deadline is Monday, June 23. After that date, additional registrations will be accepted as space permits. Please click on the information portals in this newsletter to learn more about the 60th Anniversary Celebration and the many ways you can participate.

If you can't make it to Bologna, you can still get in on Bologna 60th Anniversary fun in Carlisle during Alumni Weekend, June 12–14, 2026, when the college celebrates all of its remarkable successes in global education.

CLICK HERE

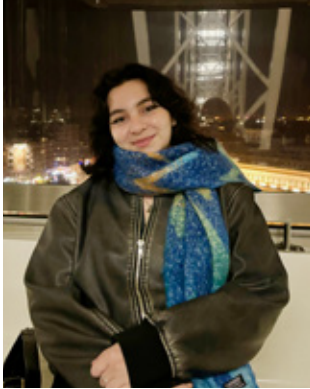
**60th Anniversary
program highlights
and registration**

CLICK HERE

**Send us your Bologna
recollections!**

Dickinson's Bologna Scholarships

Support Great Student Experiences



Sofia Rojo '26

Sofia Rojo '26

I am honored to be matched this year with the **Francesco Guccini Study Abroad Scholarship**. I am deeply grateful for the support from alumni and friends of the Bologna program; your generosity helps me to continue my participation in Dickinson's Bologna program and eases the financial burden of my Dickinson education for my family and me.

I am a third-year political science and Italian studies major with a minor in economics. My time at Dickinson has been remarkable and fulfilling. As I wrote last semester, the experience of my sister, Amara Rojo '19, inspired my interest in studying in Bologna. She spoke highly of her year abroad in Málaga, Spain, and we both welcomed the challenge of pursuing a double major. Last fall, I took a class on the history of women's political thought, taught in Italian at the University of Bologna (UniBo). This challenging experience pushed me out of my comfort zone, allowing me to experience the different teaching style at UniBo and to improve my language skills significantly. It was an invaluable opportunity that I discovered only through Dickinson and at UniBo.

This semester, I am volunteering at Mensa Padre Ernesto dell'Antoniano di Bologna, a local organization in Bologna that provides restaurant-style meals to at-risk populations in Bologna. My participation with this organization has allowed me to connect with incredibly resilient people, and our conversations are the highlight of my week.

When I return to campus in the fall, I'll resume my involvement with the Italian club, which hosts events centered on bringing Italian culture to Carlisle. At the end of each semester, a local Italian restaurant caters a dinner, during which student achievements in the program are recognized and celebrated. A notable event I recall from last year was the Nutella tasting at the Romance Language House, where I lived during my sophomore year. We sampled various Italian chocolate spreads and voted on our favorite—Pan di Stelle was the winner! Additionally, I am involved in Kappa Alpha Theta, a national sorority that works with Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA), and legal services organization that provides advocates for abused or neglected children in the foster care system. Every semester, we have a fundraiser to raise awareness of this issue, and many of our members have continued this work after graduation.

I'll be returning to the Carlisle campus as a senior, looking forward to graduation. I'm not rushing things, but I do think about my plans after Dickinson. After graduation, I intend to pursue career opportunities that allow me to employ my analytical and communication skills. I am considering the fields of finance and journalism, as they would allow me to apply my critical thinking skills and interest in global affairs. I am also considering law school in the U.S. or graduate school in Bologna.

The Francesco Guccini Study Abroad Scholarship lightened my financial burden and allowed me to focus on my studies. This generosity truly means the world to me, supporting my Bologna experience and bringing me one step closer to achieving my goals.



Mensa Padre Ernesto dell'Antoniano di Bologna



Pan di Stelle

Dickinson's Bologna Scholarships

Support Great Student Experiences



Mina Lee '26

Mina Lee '26

I am a political science and sociology double major and am so grateful to generous Bologna alumni and the Nilsson family for supporting my Bologna experience through the **K. Robert and Juliana P. Nilsson Scholarship**.

I cannot adequately express my gratitude for your generous support for Dickinson students. I am a low-income, first-generation college student from an immigrant family. I have many younger siblings, and I must admit that it was a struggle to plan for college without burdening my parents. The Nilsson Scholarship lowered the financial barriers to my earning my undergraduate degree at Dickinson and will help to make it possible for me to pursue graduate work in political science following graduation.

My spring semester in Bologna has truly been a life-changing experience. With the support of Dickinson's Nilsson Center, I am taking classes that help me to complete my political science major, and all of us have explored Bologna, other cities and regions in Italy and several locations in Europe. I could never recreate a semester like this one, and I am absolutely making the most of my time studying abroad.

Being a Dickinson student has impacted me in ways I cannot describe in this letter without overwhelming you and taking too much of your time. Your kindness and generosity have brought about innumerable immeasurable changes in my life. I cannot emphasize that enough, but I can say "Thank you."



Ciao, Bologna alumni!

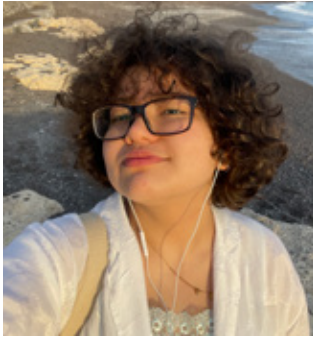
Over the years, many of us have supported the growing number of Bologna scholarships that help Dickinson students to live and study in the special place we all hold close to our hearts. I remember so clearly why I wanted to go and what I hoped it would be like. I remember just as clearly how stimulating and transformative the actual experience was. The Bologna program delivered so much more than I ever could have expected. You can't know until you get there!

**CLICK
TO GIVE!**

I give to Dickinson's Bologna program so that more Dickinson students can participate in the exploration and discovery that we knew. Our undergraduate months in Bologna probably make the short list of our greatest life experiences; let's share them. I hope that you will make a gift to one of these Bologna funds, too.

A presto, Jim Chambers '78

Student Perspectives



Robin Varol '26

Robin Varol '26

Growing up in Central Asia and having lived in the U.S. for the past few years, spending this semester in Italy was an experience of growth and revelations that I could not have known in any other place, at any other time. In many ways, both small and big, I felt like a person again. The boundaries separating work and life, which for me had been growing increasingly blurry in the American habitus, felt unusually clear and natural in Italian everyday life. Without the ever-present pressures of constant productivity and efficiency, taking slower and longer routes back home became easier, and indulging daily in long, sincere conversations became the new norm. Leisures of life took smaller, but no less significant shapes, and with the guilt of unearned pleasures abating slowly, too, came the acceptance that they never had to be earned in the first place. Slowing down was no longer a mental battle, but a pace of life I need not struggle incessantly to catch up with.

As the windy February of Bologna bled into the beginning of spring, come April, I headed toward the Tyrrhenian coast to explore the Comune di Maratea, the “Pearl of the Tyrrhenian.” Blissfully empty of crowds of tourists, the rocky coastline and steep cliffs of Maratea became a sanctuary, where I hid from troubling thoughts and the crowd of the city. I stayed in the small village of Acquafredda, perched on the high, rocky coast in the northernmost part of the *comune* overlooking the Anginarra and Luppa beaches, which I visited every morning and for the last time shortly before my departure. From tasting *la melanzane* and *cavatelli* at local *osterie* and *trattorie* to asking residents for directions and chatting strictly in Italian, Maratea pushed me to embrace and interact intimately with its languid and kind culture.



Comune di Maratea



Santo Janni Dragon Lizard



Spiaggia di Fiumicello



Pastiera Napoletana

Every day, from the hike down to Spiaggia Grotta della Scala in the company of Maratea’s Santo Janni Dragon lizards to the reading of Giorgio Bassani’s *Gold Rimmed Glasses* within the seclusion of Spiaggia di Santa Teresa, offered me ways to stay grounded and in touch with my surroundings. Sitting in the caves along the rocky coast of Spiaggia di Fiumicello, which I visited twice— once on a breezy, sunny day and then in the rain, under the grey, sardonic clouds— I wrote again for the first time in a long while. In a short time, Maratea became an experience that I would never forget. Then, on the morning of Easter Sunday, with a sweet taste of Pastiera Napoletana and a wistful, heavy heart, I left Maratea and with it, surely, a piece of my heart.

Student Perspectives

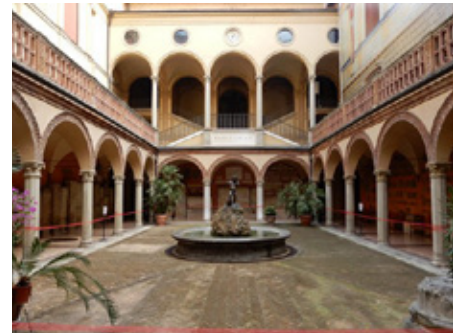


From left: Isabelle Ames '26 (University of Bremen program), Ellie Hirsch '26, Sarah Amato '26, Jenna Festa '26, Andrew Brisco'26, Sydney Cooper '26 at the Museo Civico Archeologico di Bologna

Sarah Amato '26, Andrew Brisco'26, Sydney Cooper '26, Jenna Festa'26, Ellie Hirsch '26

During spring semester, we participated in an independent study conducted in Italian with Prof. Grazioli titled “Observe, reflect, create: An exploration of form and function in ancient ceramics.” Through observation and analysis of historical ceramics and through hands-on experience in a local ceramist’s studio, this highly experiential independent study helped us to develop a creative understanding of ceramic forms and processes, connect theory and practice, and appreciate how pottery is connected with and can represent many aspects of human life.

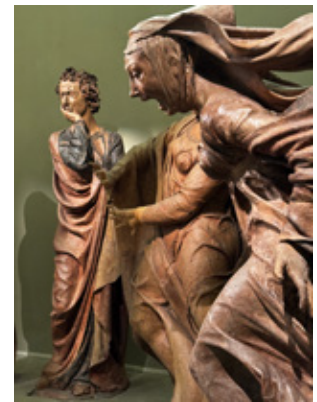
SYDNEY: As part of this course, we visited the Museo Civico Archeologico di Bologna, located just off of Piazza Maggiore. Opened in 1881, the museum holds the third largest Egyptian collection in Italy, and it is well-known for its Roman, Greek and Etruscan-Italic sections. The



Museo Civico Archeologico di Bologna

latter constitutes the most important part of the museum and documents the development of the city of Bologna since it was named “Felsina,” the capital of the Etruscan region of the Po Valley.

JENNA: We also visited the famous “Compianto sul Cristo Morto,” the “Lamentation over the Dead Christ” by Niccolò Dell’Arca (second half of the 15th century) on display at the Church of Santa Maria della Vita, Bologna, a set of life-size terracotta statues representing the moments after the deposition of Christ from the cross. It is considered among the most important terracotta sculptural complexes of the Italian Renaissance, known for its expressive power and realism. I am one of those who was moved by this work when I visited the terracotta statues in the church of Santa Maria della Vita in Bologna. In this scene, a group of biblical characters surround Christ and mourn his death. There are holes in Christ’s feet and hands and a wound in his torso, and he wears a crown of thorns. My overall impression of this work is anxiety, because the emotions of the women are so strong and realistic. The emotions of Mary Magdalene, Mary of Cleophas, and the Virgin Mary are of extreme despair, and for Mary Salome it is sorrow. St. John the Apostle has a sober expression of sorrow, and Nicodemus looks at the audience with an expression of frustration. The artist used many details to create the gamut of emotions, to make the scene realistic, and to represent the themes of death and shared grief. Art is made to touch viewers and to tell a story, and sometimes it can inspire faith and religious values in viewers.



Mary Magdalene and the Apostle John statues in the Compianto sul Cristo Morto

Student Perspectives

ANDREW: We independently visited the Museo Internazionale della Ceramica (MIC) in Faenza, a small city about one hour by train east of Bologna. MIC is described as holding the largest collection of ceramic art in the world, with over 60,000 works in its collection, ranging from the year 4000 B.C. to the present day. “Mibarrioerassi... asi... asi.. esdecir... quéseyomeloacuerdoasi” or “Nocturno a mi Barrio” de Anibal Troilo by Silvia Zotta struck me the most. Its name comes from the lyrics of a song by Argentine singer-songwriter Aníbal



Museo Internazionale della Ceramica (MIC) in Faenza



Ceramic work by Silvia Zotta

Troilo, a tribute to his neighborhood, perhaps in Buenos Aires. Zotta, also from Argentina, may be honoring her neighborhood through this work. The pieces are made of glazed earthenware in a variety of shapes, for example, circles, cylinders, cubes and rectangles mounted on a white wall. Each individual shape is of one color, and it is the collection of the shapes and the variety of colors that create a unified image. I think the somewhat deconstructed nature of the piece attracts me. The decoration of the other objects enhances the form because of the way color is used. If all the shapes were the same color, it would still be interesting, but the colors and their placement throughout the piece give a sense of intentionality and certainly makes it more interesting to look at. Also, because Zotta used a wide range of colors, the piece has much more visual interest than if only a few colors were present. This work is part of the 20th Century International Sculpture collection, which includes other objects that seem to be a combination of conceptual pieces.

SARAH AND ELLIE: As part of this independent study, we spent ten hours in the ceramics studio Bifranci Ceramica, just around the corner from the Nilsson Center, where Francesca Tomasini, a professional ceramist whose work has been featured in national newspapers and magazines, taught us two techniques: coiling and throwing. Bringing together our observations and reflections on ancient pottery at the Archeological Museum of Bologna and at the Museum of Ceramics in Faenza, the complex emotional language of statues in the Compianto by Dell’Arca and our class discussions on form and function in objects, we designed and realized two objects to express and represent the entirety of our experiences during this independent study. Our experience in the ceramics lab was very positive.



Bifranci Ceramica



Ceramics class at Bifranci Ceramica



Some of the students' ceramic creations

We found the lab to be educational, challenging, fun and therapeutic. We liked how the pottery lab gave us the opportunity to apply the things we learned about form and function from the lectures to make something functional, interesting and creative. It was very satisfying to have the opportunity to combine all of the elements that we discussed and studied in class with the process in the ceramics lab and bring our ideas to life using the material from the lectures.

Student Perspectives



Thomson Falk '26 and Kristin Lazar '26

Kristin Lazar '26 and Thomson Falk '26

We have been in Bologna since August 2024, and during the academic year, we've taken a variety of classes in Italian and in English at the Nilsson Center and at the University of Bologna. During spring semester, we took the Intercultural Seminar, co-taught by Prof. Trazzi and Prof. Grazioli. This type of seminar is offered at selected Dickinson Centers abroad to encourage students to reflect broadly on their site-specific experiences. The course comprises both in-class (readings, class discussions, writing assignments, and presentations) and out-of-class components (volunteer opportunities, teaching assistantship, shadowing, or service learning), providing students with a window onto the workings of their host society. For our out-of-class component, we chose to collaborate as TAs with teachers at Liceo Laura Bassi, a high school on Via Sant'Isaia.

KRISTIN: This semester, I had the privilege of working seven hours a week at Liceo Laura Bassi. I worked with almost every grade level, blending lessons with discussions and plenty of Q&A time. The experience allowed me to go from theory to practice, to apply topics we discussed in class, particularly the connection between language and culture, to direct observations among Italian teenagers. I speak in English when I am in class with the students so that they practice their communication skills. At the same time, my speaking Italian is really helpful because I can help them find the correct English word they are looking for when they get stuck. Our pattern of exchange provides a balance in our learning: The students are learning English with me, and I am practicing my knowledge of Italian to help them.



Liceo Laura Bassi

I studied Italian as a high school student, and I relate really well to my students' struggles to learn a new language. I've shown the ways that I've helped myself when I've had difficulty with certain verb tenses. I feel my experience with the students at Liceo Laura Bassi has offered all of us a great cultural exchange through community engagement. It has been a meaningful way for me to learn so much about living in Bologna, and I think that I did help students to grow in their knowledge and understanding of the English language and American culture.

THOMSON: At Liceo Laura Bassi, I have been teaching high school classes on topics such as law, economics and cinema in English. The experience has allowed me to observe and reflect on some of the topics Dickinson students have discussed in class relating to identity, language and culture. My studies and explorations as a Dickinson student in Bologna have helped me to understand and better acclimate myself to the interesting yet different environment of Laura Bassi. I am eager to unpack these topics and their significance, a process that will help me to understand how my experience at the *liceo* has impacted my experience abroad and the perception of my own linguistic and cultural identity.

In our Dickinson coursework, we've explored the variety of dialects spoken in Italy and how the Italian language emerged from Latin, and how it changes region by region, from north to south. These topics in my Dickinson classes sparked my interest in trying to understand how students learn English in the Laura Bassi setting and in the Italian school system. The Italian high schoolers I taught had difficulty conjugating verbs and using the correct tense in English. Can this one point be explained by differences in how foreign languages are taught or, perhaps, by differences in the structure of the languages themselves? To what extent is native culture involved in teaching a new language?

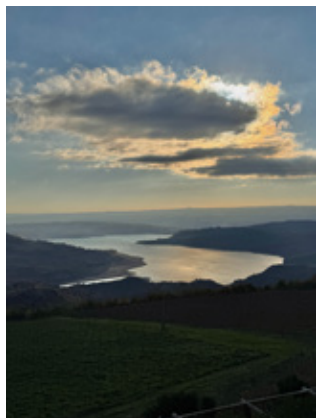
Teaching at the *liceo* has encouraged me to think more critically about how our native language and culture affects how we learn and speak new languages. The students I met, from first- to fourth-year students, spoke English in different ways, perhaps reflecting their own linguistic identity. This experience has provided me with a new lens and appreciation for shifts and identities in teaching and learning alike.

Semester highlights

It is our pleasure to share some of the several moments and occasions that made this spring semester special.



Movie director Margherita Ferri spoke with Dickinson students after the screening



Lago di Corbara, Umbria

The Barberani family has been making wine on their estate near Lake Corbara since 1961. We visited the estate to savor wines inspired by the family history and tradition. The family's "Amore" is a light and fruity rosé, and their "Luigi and Giovanna" is a drier white named after the owners' parents.



At the Barberani family vineyard



Prof. Galeotti's class at the movies

Prof. Galeotti and students in her Italian Language and Culture in Context class attended an ad-hoc screening of "Il ragazzo dai pantaloni rosa," the most viewed Italian movie of 2024 which, building on a tragic event that occurred in 2012, contributed to raising awareness around cyberbullying, youth fragility and emotional intelligence. Movie director Margherita Ferri joined us for the screening and answered questions from the audience.

This semester, we made the most of the May 1 *ponte* long holiday weekend and the beginning of truly wonderful weather and decided to have one three-day trip, rather than two shorter excursions.

Seeking opportunities to enjoy the natural world, we traveled three hours south of Bologna to southern Umbria, the region commonly referred to as the "lungs of Italy," thanks to its vast green areas. We stayed at the beautiful Castello di Titignano, a small castle perched atop a hill surrounded by vineyards and overlooking the scenic Lago di Corbara. Sitting at the intersection of three regions, Umbria, Tuscany and Lazio, Lago di Corbara is part of the protected area of the Tiber River Park. From the lake, the river Tiber flows southwest to Rome and ultimately to the Tyrrhenian Sea.



In the courtyard of the Castello di Titignano

Semester highlights



Perugina headquarters, Perugia



A hint of the global business of Perugina chocolate



Il Duomo di Orvieto

Moving from vast landscapes to urban settings, our group visited three Umbrian towns: Perugia, Orvieto and Assisi.

In Perugia, we learned about the artistic manufacturing of the famous Perugina chocolates.

In Orvieto, students visited il Duomo, the construction of which began in 1290. Of particular interest were the famous Cappella di San Brizio, which houses a fresco cycle by Luca Signorelli (1500s), including his striking *The Resurrection of the Flesh*. We all were amazed at Il Pozzo di San Patrizio, a well with an underground double-spiral staircase reaching about 54 meters (170 feet). The spiral staircases never meet, offering an ingenious system for descending and ascending without encountering opposing traffic.

In Assisi, we learned about the related religious orders established by San Francesco and Santa Chiara and toured the basilicas where their tombs are located.



Resurrection of the Flesh



Il Pozzo di San Patrizio



La Chiesa di San Francesco



DICKINSON STUDENTS IN THE PRESS

Click to view the article and video!

A couple of our students were interviewed today by RAI, the state TV, about the election of Pope Leo XIV.

Alumni

Memories: Melia Bonomo '13

I participated in the Bologna program in spring 2012. The cultural experience of studying abroad—the food, the art and architecture, the feeling of walking under *i portici*, and the excursions that Dickinson took us on around the city and beyond—was, of course, transformative. The academic experience ended up being pivotal for me, as well.

I had convinced my academic advisors and the program director that I was prepared enough to take a medical physics course in Italian at UniBo. The first day that I sat down in that class, I was nervous that I had bitten off more than I could chew. While I caught a few of the words that Prof. Paola Fantazzini used, most of the technical context was lost on me. But I stuck with it. Little by little and with help from my study buddy Riccardo, who became a lifelong friend, my Italian comprehension improved. I learned the physics of how magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) machines worked and, to my surprise, how Prof. Fantazzini was applying her research beyond the medical field. In class, she talked briefly about the projects that her group worked on using portable MRI to help restore cultural assets *in situ*. Since a fresco painting can't be brought into the lab, you have to bring the lab to it! I became enthralled with the possibility of combining my interests in physics and the arts. We developed a relationship, and I worked with her to prepare a Fulbright proposal to return to Italy after I graduated to conduct research in her lab. Back on campus for fall semester, I got permission to skip a week of classes to travel back to Europe and attend the annual conference on MRI applications that Prof. Fantazzini organized.

My Fulbright project didn't get funded, but, undeterred, I returned to Italy after graduation to serve as a teaching assistant through Dickinson's connection with the SITE Lombardy program. After my SITE experience, I returned to the U.S. to do graduate research that combined physics, MRI and the arts. My project involved neuroimaging to study music processing in the brain. I'm now a physics professor at Rice University, and I credit Prof. Fantazzini for opening my eyes to the broadness of applied physics research that I hadn't known existed.

Prof. Fantazzini was a valuable mentor and role model. She was the first and only female physics professor that I had ever had. I've visited Bologna several times since my Dickinson years, and walking the streets around UniBo always brings back those memories of the trials and ultimate triumphs of learning physics in Italian and the profound impact of Prof. Fantazzini on my career path.



Melia Bonomo '13 at the Nilsson Center



Did you know Prof. Nilsson?

Ciao, amici! Did you study in Bologna with Professor and Judy Nilsson? What do you remember most fondly from those days? I am pleased to lead this effort to gather our recollections and reminiscences of our experiences as Dickinson students while living, discovering and studying in Bologna.

Our submissions will make up a booklet to accompany the unveiling of a plaque to honor the Nilssons that will take place during the 60th Anniversary Celebration of the Bologna program. The booklet will also be available electronically for wider distribution. [Click here](#)

CLICK HERE to submit!

to submit the memory you'd like to share. Thank you very much for being a part of this project. —Richard Levie '66



Richard Levie '66

Alumni

The doors at the Nilsson Center are always open to welcome returning Bologna alumni. We invite all Bologna alumni to be in touch with us and stop by during their travels.

During the spring, we received visits from these Dickinson-in-Bologna alumni:



Eva Zuckerkandel '76
(studied in Bologna 1974-75)



Pete Frengel '87 (studied in Bologna 1985-86) and **Kim Frengel**



Tawi Hidaka Salim '09
(studied in Bologna 2007-08) with former Bologna program Associate Director **Clarissa Pagni**



Brent Cassell '01 (studied in Bologna 1999-2000) with former Bologna program Associate Director **Clarissa Pagni**



Former Bologna director Prof. **Marc Ruhl** and **Shirley Ruhl**. Marc directed the Bologna program four separate periods: '77-'78, '84-'86, '92-'93, 2006-'08

Not pictured Kelly Wark Nordini '91.

From the Archives



Eva Zuckerkandel '76



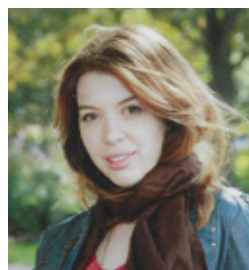
Pete Frengel '87



Kelly Wark Nordini '91



Brent Cassell '01



Tawi Hidaka Salim '09



Melia Bonomo '13

Catching up!

With our apologies, we are including here a couple of photos of alumni visits that took place during fall semester that we did not include in the fall 2024 edition of the Bologna Newsletter.

The frequency of alumni visits increases every semester, and we welcome the company. Many thanks to Doug & Ellen and to Kyle & Katie for making sure to stop by the Nilsson Center last semester while in Bologna. We hope that we helped to inspire many happy recollections of your student days.



Doug and Ellen Wertman visited the Nilsson Center in fall 2024.



Kyle (KyungJun) Lee '22 and Katie Nemergut '23 visited the Nilsson Center in fall 2024.

Grazie e ciao a tutti!



The Bologna Team (left to right): Elena Giulia Dall' Acqua, Program Associate; Luca Trazzi, Director of European Studies; Ellen Laird, Administrative Director; and Bruno Grazioli, Director of Italian Studies

As the semester draws to an end here in Bologna, we want to take a moment to congratulate this big group of students (52!) on completing their transformative journey abroad. They have embraced new perspectives, navigated challenges and contributed meaningfully to our community. It's been a pleasure to witness their growth inside and outside the classroom, and we are happy that they are now part of this special chapter in Bologna.

We hope to see many alumni back here with us in October for all or part of the week of activities to celebrate the 60th Anniversary of Dickinson's Bologna program, an exciting milestone in our shared history!

Dickinson will continue to share news about the Bologna program's 60th anniversary celebration throughout fall 2025. Please contact the Office of Alumni Engagement at alumni@dickinson.edu with any questions.

