Why Study Italian?

- Knowledge of Italian is important for people in business, the arts, technology and many professions. It also is useful for high school and college students planning careers in art history, music, linguistics, education and international relations.

- Italian is the fourth most frequently spoken foreign languages in U.S. homes, according to the U.S. Census Bureau (2000). Italian also is spoken in Switzerland, parts of Africa, the Balkans, and the island of Malta.

- Italy is one of the top seven economies in the world and is a member of the G7 Group of the wealthiest democracies of the world.

- An estimated 7,500 American companies do business with Italy and more than 1,000 U.S. firms have offices in Italy including IBM, General Electric, Motorola, City Bank and Price Waterhouse.

- Italy is a world leader in tool manufacturing, with advanced technologies in robotics, electromagnetic machinery, shipbuilding, space engineering, construction machinery and transportation equipment.

- Italy has long been a magnet for the tourism industry. In 2004 Italy headed the list of foreign destinations for vacation travel in Europe. Travel and tourism products in Italy increased by 339% in Italy in 2004 compared to 2003 when it grew 113%. This compared with the European average of 60%.

- Italy is a world leader in the culinary arts, interior designs, fashion, graphic design, furniture design, etc. Those planning careers in such fields greatly benefit from knowing Italian.

- Art historians need Italian. According to UNESCO (the cultural and educational agency for the United Nations), over 60 percent of the entire world’s art treasures are found in Italy.

- Italy’s economy is changing: state-owned companies are becoming privatized, opening up the Italian market to American companies and professionals in aerospace, transportation, insurance, finance, shipping, telecommunications and other commerce.

- With the Italian market opening, American companies alike AT&T and IBM will be establishing ties with Italian companies in the areas of Cable TV, international cellular telephone systems, the Internet and more, and will need employees who speak Italian and English.

- American companies expanding in Italy have a great demand for software designers, systems engineers, technical support, marketers and managers who speak Italian and English.

- Italian is the language having the “best phonetic fit.” It is the easiest foreign language to read, write, and pronounce because there is only one sound per letter of the alphabet (and four
consonant blends). For young learners, the easier the language, the better. Italian will not compete with the learning of English, it will enhance the learning of English.

- Students preparing for the SATs who have studied Italian tend to score higher on vocabulary and grammar. The reason is simple: Italian developed from Latin and an estimated 60 percent of English vocabulary comes directly from Latin.

- Italian is in fact the Romance language closest to Latin. Knowledge of Italian, therefore, will go far in helping one to understand the whys and wherefores of the English language, which has a very large percentage of words of Latin derivation.

- Italian is also the language closest to English (Cambridge Encyclopedia of Language, 1987). Italian will therefore serve to enrich our students’ knowledge of English vocabulary since it contains many cognates and roots that resonate with familiarity.

- It is much easier to dyslexics to learn to read in languages where there is a one-to-one correspondence between letters and sounds. In Italian, dyslexics have a far easier time than in English or French. Dyslexics are rare in Italy.

- Young Americans who want to be physicians, dentists and veterinarians, but who cannot afford tuition at American schools can study at Italian universities for a fraction of the cost. Their degrees are valid in the U.S.

- Italy is one of the most popular countries in the world to migrate to. In the decade 1989-1999, Italy’s foreign population more than tripled from 490,000 to 1,500,000.