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AATG Symposium

Mit Deutsch in die Zukunft

My personal goal as the president of AATG is to encourage open dialogue and to initiate positive change, which, at times, requires addressing complex issues. Like many of you, I feel overwhelmed with the sheer amount of challenges teachers and professors in German face. Many of these issues concern all educators, including funding, or rather lack thereof, for public education, the overall de facto decrease of salaries, benefits, and professional development and research opportunities for many teachers and scholars, the alarming increase of contingent labor in higher education, and pressing questions about equality, equity, and diversity for students and educators. In German, these problems seem magnified given the decrease in funding for language education specifically and the relatively small size of German programs in K-12 settings and colleges and universities even though the interest in cultural and intercultural learning is relatively high. As a result, the development of new curricular and scholarly initiatives in addition to our regular workloads leaves many of us feeling exhausted.

Then again, from a different vantage point, the core of our profession is alive and well. German teachers teach German, the culture of the German-speaking world, and critical 21st century skills, including intercultural skills. University and college professors shape their work as teacher scholars to promote the interconnectedness of teaching and research at all levels. In today's world, teaching and learning take place inside the classroom and, increasingly, in a number of virtual and online environments. Hence, the reach of our professional endeavors has expanded. Many colleagues plan, organize, and host co-curricular activities in order to offer students transformational experiences that extend beyond the classroom and create a community of German speakers and participants in the transatlantic dialogue.

Given this context, the German profession must address a number of critical, at times intertwined challenges in order to ensure a future with German. Research in Second Language Acquisition and in German Studies backs our intuitive understanding that teaching German is more than teaching a skill. It is a complex undertaking with value in and of itself. Our classrooms and online learning spaces are the "real world" that create opportunities for diverse identities, beliefs, and opinions to gather and to express themselves in a different language. Language and identity, language and the places we live and call home and the places we visit and study are intertwined. Teaching German is to address the many questions we face as human beings. As we consider research priorities and learning goals, curricula, and pedagogies in a global context, we must remember that, as German educators, it is our responsibility to help students get to know a world of German. How can we achieve this ambitious goal?

1. Train, recruit, and mentor highly qualified teachers and college/university professors and provide professional development opportunities for instructors at all levels and at all career stages.
2. Foster collaboration, sharing, and networking among teachers and college/university professors and students at all levels.

3. Increase the visibility of German at all levels. We know it takes the collaborative and sustained effort of all stake holders, including teachers, professors, principals, deans, school and university administrators, counselors and advisors, parents, students, and community members, in order to promote a global education that includes German.
4. Advocate for German at all levels and in a range of contexts and discourses. The report *America's Languages: Investing in Language Education for the 21st Century*, published by the American Academy of Arts & Sciences in 2016, emphasizes the need for more language learning and teaching in the US. It cites career readiness, national security, health benefits, and the need for equity and diversity as pertinent reasons why language learning is a critical component of a 21st century education. Teachers and college/university professors must be able to succinctly explain to a range of stakeholders why the learning and teaching of languages, literatures, and cultures is critical in today's globalized world.
5. Focus on diversity and equity. As German educators, we know first hand how persuasive and persistent cultural attitudes, expectations, and imagery, including stereotypes, can be. Hence, many of us engage our students and the broader community in order to raise awareness and initiate conversations about the diverse cultures of the German-speaking world in order to promote a more contemporary image of German-speaking countries and to contribute to an intercultural dialogue that reflects the transatlantic friendship. Through our work, we strive to broaden the idea of the German speaker to include diverse perspectives on language and culture, to prepare for intercultural encounters between diverse speakers, and to foster dialogue and discourse in German in order to create a more just and equitable world.

The work of AATG is critical to address today's challenges. AATG has the good fortune of active members whose work reflects high standards, cutting-edge innovation, and a deep commitment to our students. Here are a few concrete suggestions how to further enhance the work of AATG in order to support the current and future community of teachers and scholars in German.

1. Strengthen AATG as an organization.
 - Recruit new members, in particular undergraduate and graduate students and teachers and scholars at the beginning of their careers.
 - Serve as an officer in your local chapter or on the AATG Board and vote in AATG elections.
2. Recognize the outstanding work of colleagues by nominating them for awards.
3. Donate to AATG. With its endowment, AATG supports undergraduate and graduate students and professionals at all levels to go abroad and to participate in critical education and professional development.

I look forward to a productive dialogue at the AATG Symposium *Mit Deutsch in die Zukunft*. I am particularly excited that the symposium provides the opportunity to engage with colleagues from Canada, Mexico, Europe, and with representatives from the Internationaler Deutschlehrerinnen- und Deutschlehrerverband. In the spirit of collaboration, my hope is that we learn from each other in order to ensure that the next generation of teachers and professors of German will be well prepared for all challenges as they get ready to embark on one of the most rewarding careers, namely, the teaching of German.