

# AAUSC Issues in Language Program Direction

## Language Program Articulation: Developing a Theoretical Foundation

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## Chapter 6

# An Articulation Study of Post-Secondary German Students: Results, Implications, and Suggestions

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### ***Abstract***

*Dwindling financial resources for education and low enrollment figures at the post-secondary level often lead to the elimination of entire German programs, yet improved program articulation may help overcome this situation. Information about students' motivations for studying German can inform both vertical and interdisciplinary articulation efforts, thereby making better use of the limited funds available and providing students with better programs of study. In this chapter the authors report a large-scale survey of post-secondary German students' reasons for enrolling in their first German course, motivations for studying German beyond the language requirement, and perceptions of the importance of several components of the German curriculum. Statistical comparisons of responses to twenty-five Likert-scale items indicate that learners are more motivated by affective factors and the development of oral and written proficiency than by pragmatic factors such as career benefits. The survey results lead to the identification of issues relevant for curricular reform and program articulation throughout the undergraduate language program, and may lead to higher enrollment figures in German. In particular, the results suggest that the careful spiraling, or integration, of language and content across all levels of the undergraduate curriculum is the key to motivating students to study German and to successful articulation. The chapter concludes with comments on the crucial role of the language program director in shaping and maintaining a well-articulated language curriculum.*

### **Background**

At the 1996 meeting of the American Association of Teachers of German (AATG), a session titled "The Future of German in American Education" drew a far larger crowd than any other. During the previous academic year, three AATG-sponsored regional discussion sessions had been held on the same subject. The summary report of these regional sessions appeared on the AATG listserv and in the *AATG Newsletter* (Byrnes 1996a), galvanizing a large number of German instructors from elementary schools through graduate programs to reflect on the status of German in the U.S. educational system. United in the perception that the future of German was in jeopardy, participants cited instances of German programs closing

at all levels of instruction or reported on tenacious battles to retain German in their institutions.

Unfortunately, even after this 1996 report and the many valuable discussions that ensued, the status of German as a language of study in the United States eroded even more. Of the 42.5% of students studying a foreign language (FL) in U.S. public high schools in 2000, only 2.1% were enrolled in German, a drop from the 2.8% registered in 1994 (Draper and Hicks 2002). On the college level, the decline was even more dramatic. Despite an upsurge in German enrollments from 1986 to 1990, much of it attributable to the increased interest in Germany because of the 1989 fall of the Berlin Wall, German lost more than 30% of its enrollments between 1990 and 1998 (Brod and Welles 2000). Between 1998 and 2002, however, enrollments for FLs, including German, increased (Welles 2004).

The 2.3% increase in German enrollments reported by Welles for 2002 justifies optimism, but must be tempered somewhat by two important factors. Overall college enrollments rose, for example, at a greater rate than those in FLs. And though the total FL enrollment was 17% higher in 2002 than in 1998, the 2.3% increase in German places it twelfth out of the fifteen languages registering the highest increase. At most, then, although German has retained third place among the languages most studied on the post-secondary level, recent numbers show that it has stabilized rather than surged upward (Welles 2004). There is, in other words, no compelling reason to forsake vigilance regarding German enrollments.

In keeping with the downsizing and restructuring of the corporate world, demand is driving supply in the academic world as well. Thus enrollment figures have turned into the decisive factor for the retention of post-secondary German programs beyond the introductory courses. To counteract the conditions causing enrollment losses in German, it is imperative to first bring them into sharp focus. Byrnes' (1996b) report on the future of German in U.S. education highlights several of the conditions that are still valid today: the reduced usefulness of German caused by the dominance of English in many disciplines, the increased interest in languages other than German, and the doubt that the study of German could facilitate educational linkages with other disciplines. In view of the declining status of German, Byrnes strongly advocates a new positioning of German, particularly through outreach activities and curricular reform at all levels of instruction. In fact, she specifies articulation as the key concept for enabling a new positioning of German: she advocates for **vertical articulation** to engender integrated sequences of study and horizontal articulation to connect German to other areas of study in the curriculum (1996b, p. 256). Byrnes' term "horizontal articulation" corresponds to Lange's (1982) widely adopted term **interdisciplinary articulation**.

Aware of the need to enroll considerable numbers of students with a background in high school German to keep their programs alive, many German departments and national organizations heeded the call to investigate possibilities for the vertical articulation of knowledge acquired in high school with the appropriate levels of college German. Initiated in 1997, the Modern Language Association's (MLA) two-year project High-School-to-College in Foreign Language Programs involved eight teams of high school and college instructors and administrators "working

with mentors to build connections between high schools and college-level foreign language programs” (Welles 1999, p. 1). Several prominent researchers in second language acquisition and applied linguistics acted as consultants, mentors, or MLA collaborators, and shared their reflections on articulation, which take into account the shaping of entire curricula, the need to go beyond mechanical assessment measures, and the developmental stages of learners (Bernhardt 1998; Byrnes 1998; Kramsch 1998).

Recognizing that tackling thorny issues of program coherence on the collegiate level becomes compelling only if college-bound high school students opt to continue the study of German at the post-secondary level, the AATG applied to the German Foreign Office’s Standing Committee for German as a Foreign Language (*Ständige Arbeitsgruppe Deutsch als Fremdsprache*) for funding to support a collaborative project meant to focus on the factors prompting high school students to either continue or halt their study of German upon entering college (Andress et al. 2002). Conducted during 1999 and 2000, the study revealed that affective reasons such as fun German classes were more likely to motivate students’ decisions to continue with German study than pragmatic reasons such as employment possibilities enabled by knowledge of German.

Though mentioning that their study did not constitute a controlled experiment, the authors stress its potential usefulness for providing guidance to those wishing to enhance enrollments and seeking to bridge the gap between pre-collegiate and collegiate levels. Agreeing with the premise of the high school study—the necessity of listening to student voices in order to maintain healthy enrollments—we heeded its clarion call to “borrow or modify” its survey instrument for one’s own collegiate institution (Andress et al. 2002, p. 11).

In the fall of 2002, with the goal of understanding student motivations underlying the study of German, Zachau conducted a survey of sixty students at all levels of undergraduate German at the University of the South, using the questionnaire from the high school survey with slight modifications. This university survey later served as the basis of the present study with a larger sample size, a study needed for addressing the major shortcoming of nationwide articulation efforts noted by Lange: “most articulation activity is at the secondary-postsecondary border” (1997, p. 39). Byrnes, too, repeatedly emphasizes the need to move articulation goals and outcomes into the entire post-secondary curriculum (1996b, p. 256; 2001a, 2001b). Influenced by research pointing to articulation lacunae in the collegiate setting, we intended our more extensive, representative survey to pinpoint reasons motivating students to elect the study of German and the factors leading them to continue with German study after the introductory FL requirement. We hypothesized that student responses would have clear implications for curricular design and language program articulation. From these implications, our study was to provide the basis for shaping an articulation model for the post-secondary German curriculum, focusing in particular on issues of vertical and interdisciplinary articulation.

The survey questionnaire for our larger study was similar to the original high school questionnaire. We retained twenty-five items, but omitted items perceived as ambiguous, unclear, or highly subjective. The revised questionnaire<sup>1</sup> consisted of thirty-one items divided into four sections: (1) six items eliciting information

about students' background, (2) nine items addressing factors affecting students' initial decision to study German, (3) ten items attending to factors affecting the choice to study German beyond the FL requirement, and (4) six items focusing on the motivating components of the post-secondary German curriculum. This questionnaire was then sent to eleven private and public post-secondary institutions in Connecticut, Georgia, New York, North Carolina, Ohio, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, and Tennessee. Of the 850 questionnaires mailed out, 497 were completed, representing a 58.5% rate of return. All survey items received responses from a minimum of 478 of the 497 respondents. Because of the general nature of the questions pertaining to motivation and interests, we did not differentiate among students in the introductory (first year), intermediate (second year), and advanced (third and fourth years) levels of collegiate German courses either when distributing the forms or when interpreting the survey results. But, given that students supplied their course level on the survey form, we provide figures on the percentage of respondents from each course level, on the percentage that continued German study started at pre-collegiate levels, and on the particular levels of pre-collegiate German this group had finished (see Table 1).

## Survey Results and Discussion

### Student Background Information

Table 1 summarizes the results of the background information provided by respondents about their university class standing, sex, and years of experience in German classes.

**Table 1**  
Student Background Information

Sex ( <i>n</i> = 487)	male (50%)	female (50%)			
Year in college ( <i>n</i> = 475)	freshmen (33%)	sophomores (26%)	juniors (25%)	seniors (15%)	
German in middle school/junior high ( <i>n</i> = 487)	yes (41%)	no (59%)			
Years of German in high school ( <i>n</i> = 271)	1 (12%)	2 (20%)	3 (26%)	4 (29%)	5 (13%)
Started German in college ( <i>n</i> = 485)	yes (46%)	no (54%)			
Current enrollment ( <i>n</i> = 445)	first-year German course (36%)	second-year German course (29%)	third-year German course (24%)	fourth-year German course (11%)	

The figures show that the highest number of students continuing with German in college had finished four years of high school German (29%), a finding the National Education Longitudinal Study database at the National Center for Educational Statistics relates to all languages: "Students who partake of a longer foreign language sequence in high school enroll at proportionally higher rates in college level foreign language courses" (Watzke 2000, p. 49). It therefore seems reasonable that the second-largest group continuing with German at the collegiate level comprises those who had a three-year sequence in high school (26%). From a study of majors and minors conducted at Miami University of Ohio, Di Donato (1998) concludes that high school German plays an important role not only in the desire to continue with German at the college level but also in the decision to major or minor in German. Undoubtedly, the strong motivating factor that a longer sequence of high school German provides for enrollments in college German should alert us to the need to assure better curriculum articulation between high schools and colleges.

At the same time, the needs of the students who began their study of German in college (46%) should not be ignored. To retain these students for advanced courses, program articulation between the different college levels of German is imperative. As expected, enrollment declines from level to level, with student losses from the introductory to the intermediate level and then again from the intermediate to the advanced levels. The fact that enrollment in third-year courses remains at a strong 24% of total enrollments suggests that relatively good articulation may exist between the intermediate level and the first year of the advanced level. On the other hand, the third-year courses may be populated by a substantial number of freshmen placed into this level on the basis of a placement exam or Advanced Placement credits. Whatever the reasons for the relatively healthy enrollment figures in the third year, the significantly reduced numbers in the fourth year (11% of the total surveyed) inevitably prompt questions of articulation. Results from the remaining items in the questionnaire provide some insight into these enrollment figures and their link to students' motivations for beginning and continuing the study of German in college. The trends in students' responses suggest areas on which to focus efforts toward the more effective articulation of the post-secondary German curriculum, trends that may potentially be applied to the more general context of the undergraduate FL curriculum.

## **Factors Motivating Students to Begin Studying German**

In Sections 2 through 4 of the survey, respondents used a 4-point Likert scale (1 = Not Important, 4 = Very Important) to rate the relative importance of various factors. An average score for each question was calculated from those ratings; these average scores were compared to ascertain the relative importance of factors within each section of the questionnaire. A higher average score indicates greater perceived importance of a factor. *T*-tests were then used to determine the significance of differences among the responses for the items within each section. Table 2 summarizes the results of Section 2 of the survey, providing students' rating of factors affecting their initial decision to study German.

**Table 2**  
**Factors Motivating Students to Begin Studying German**

Item	1 <sup>a</sup>	2	3	4	Not Applicable	Average score
Seemed like fun ( <i>n</i> = 497)	12%	21%	35%	24%	8%	2.77
I like languages in general ( <i>n</i> = 495)	16%	19%	25%	29%	11%	2.75
Previous visits to Germany ( <i>n</i> = 492)	13%	5%	8%	13%	61%	2.53
Possibility of career benefits ( <i>n</i> = 497)	22%	19%	19%	23%	17%	2.51
My parents/grandparents speak German ( <i>n</i> = 490)	15%	7%	7%	10%	61%	2.29
Reputation of German Program ( <i>n</i> = 491)	23%	17%	17%	10%	33%	2.21
Friends took German ( <i>n</i> = 486)	28%	18%	13%	5%	36%	1.93
Brother or sister took German ( <i>n</i> = 491)	19%	8%	5%	3%	65%	1.79
Recommendation of school counselor ( <i>n</i> = 491)	25%	9%	7%	4%	55%	1.79

*a. 1 = Not Important, 2 = Somewhat Important, 3 = Important, 4 = Very Important*

The two factors rated most highly in the decision to study German are “seemed like fun” and “I like languages in general.” The average scores for these factors are significantly higher than the scores for the remaining seven items (*p* < .01). The high percentage of students who rated “seemed like fun” as Important or Very Important (59%) propels this item to its first-place ranking among the factors motivating students to enroll in their first German course. Although we recognize the pitfalls of using a vague word such as “fun,” we did not want to remove this category from the high school questionnaire we had in essence replicated. In our view, fun has many positive dimensions, including the study of history or of ideas. Like the high school survey, our data merely support the conclusion that students will continue the study of German if they regard learning German as a pleasurable experience.

In Table 2, the second-highest average score (2.75) for motivating students’ initial enrollment in a German class also pertains to an affective factor: the enjoyment of languages in general. A majority of students (54%) rated this factor as Important or Very Important. What, precisely, students like when they “like languages in general” remains of course vague. The positive attitude toward German study that a general liking of languages engenders can be helpful in articulating the



post-secondary German curriculum. Vertical articulation efforts can focus on continuously expanding the intellectual and personal rewards of language learning.

With the caveat that the evidence she provides is anecdotal, we refer to the distinct enjoyment gap between high school and university courses mentioned by James (1998). Disappointment with college courses in language “is increasingly being reported back to high school teachers” (p. 13) by students accustomed to varied language activities at the high school level. These students, adds James, do not enjoy getting to college and finding themselves sitting in one-dimensional introductory language courses, where they may end up because of their scores on grammar-based, discrete-point placement tests; and they do not enjoy sitting in advanced language courses talking about literature in English or struggling with sophisticated literary interpretations in an FL.

Articulation models and practices need to address the issues this trend implicitly raises: “What kinds of learning activities are appropriate at various developmental stages?” and “What concepts about learning, the learner, the instructor, and the curriculum assure a holistic curriculum enabling students to progress to advanced levels in knowledge, language usage, and thinking skills?” Results from Section 2 of the questionnaire suggest that affective factors must be taken into account when designing the curriculum and choosing teaching methodologies. A planned approach to these two elements of the FL program will enhance articulation and potentially increase enrollments at the advanced levels as well.

In Table 2, two less important but nonetheless highly rated factors contribute to students' initial decision to study German: “previous visits to Germany” and “possibility of career benefits.” Before administering the survey, we expected these factors to exert a stronger influence on motivating students to take German. Yet 61% of survey respondents marked “previous visits to Germany” as Not Applicable to their decision to study German, possibly because they had not yet visited Germany. Furthermore, of those students who had visited Germany, 13% rated such visits as Not Important in the decision to enroll in college German classes. Although “previous visits to Germany” plays a lesser role than predicted in motivating the study of German, it is ranked as either Important or Very Important by 21% of respondents. Thus, every effort should be undertaken to promote travel and study opportunities in German-speaking countries. Faculty should also encourage students who have been abroad to discuss their experiences with their peers. From the perspective of curriculum design and language program articulation, considerable thought should be given to the types of programs abroad that would benefit students the most. Preparation for entry into the study abroad environment and reentry into the collegiate German program should also be considered (Wilkinson, this volume).

One of the most surprising results of our survey pertains to the “possibility of career benefits”; an almost equal number of respondents rank this item as Not Important and Very Important. This result could indicate either that many students were not aware of career benefits or that they were not interested in them. Whatever the case, the finding should give pause to those who consider the advertising of career benefits of German the panacea to raise enrollments. By showing

that 40% of the surveyed students either do not consider the issue of career benefits applicable to them or classify it as unimportant, our data indicate that benefits of studying German likely to be experienced only in a distant future (at least in student minds) or utilitarian advantages in general play a considerably lesser role in sparking German enrollments than has routinely been assumed.

Nonetheless, because a relatively high percentage of students (61%) do attach some importance to the potential career benefits of German, and because this item ranks fourth in the list of nine factors in this section of the survey, post-secondary educators attempting to shape an articulated curriculum cannot afford to ignore student expectations coupling the study of German with career benefits. It should, however, not automatically be assumed that those interested in career benefits will necessarily gravitate to courses combining the study of German with business fields such as marketing or management. To merely add a course or two involving German for business to the existing curriculum not only seems woefully inadequate, but also seems detrimental in the attempt to attain a well-articulated curriculum. Instead, the teaching of professional terminology or of customary German business dealings needs to be embedded in larger issues of German cultural beliefs and practices and should connect to other disciplines, such as ethics, economics, or politics. Student interest in German for the purpose of enhancing career possibilities should, in other words, engender creative interdisciplinary articulation.

The five factors ranked as least important to students' decisions to study German are "my parents/grandparents speak German," "reputation of German program," "friends took German," "brother or sister took German," and "recommendation of school counselor." The high percentage of Not Applicable responses for each of these factors underlines the fact that they play little or no role in determining German enrollments for most students. Though German heritage, for example, does prompt some students to choose German study, the large number of respondents rating this factor as Not Applicable (61%) in combination with a low percentage of students rating it as Very Important (10%) indicates that heritage issues need not figure prominently in the planning of an articulated German curriculum. Post-secondary students of German also do not seem to be strongly influenced by siblings or friends who have taken German,<sup>2</sup> by the reputation of the German program, or by the recommendation of high school counselors. Certainly, the high percentage of Not Applicable answers for these questionnaire items and the low average score for each substantiates such a conclusion. These data suggest that a certain degree of independence may characterize many students of German, a trait that could be turned into a useful consideration in curriculum planning. That is, exploratory, nonrigid forms of study might be particularly appealing to students enrolled in German.

### **Factors Motivating Students to Continue German Study**

Table 3 summarizes the results of Section 3 of the questionnaire, which focuses on students' reasons for continuing their study of German beyond the introductory FL requirement.

**Table 3**  
Factors Motivating the Decision to Continue with German Beyond the FL Requirement

Item	1 <sup>a</sup>	2	3	4	Not Applicable	Average score
Good progress in German ( <i>n</i> = 490)	6%	14%	36%	39%	5%	3.13
Interesting classes ( <i>n</i> = 490)	8%	13%	40%	35%	5%	3.09
Comfortable German class ( <i>n</i> = 489)	8%	17%	38%	31%	6%	2.97
Love of German ( <i>n</i> = 488)	9%	18%	33%	33%	7%	2.96
Opportunities to live/work in Germany ( <i>n</i> = 490)	18%	17%	21%	29%	14%	2.71
Relevance to my major ( <i>n</i> = 491)	22%	17%	16%	24%	22%	2.55
Encouragement by college professor ( <i>n</i> = 487)	20%	19%	18%	13%	30%	2.35
Relevance to other academic subjects ( <i>n</i> = 489)	23%	23%	22%	12%	20%	2.29
Extracurricular activities in German ( <i>n</i> = 494)	27%	22%	17%	6%	27%	2.02
German-related scholarship ( <i>n</i> = 490)	24%	10%	8%	7%	50%	1.98

*a. 1 = Not Important, 2 = Somewhat Important, 3 = Important, 4 = Very Important*

The five factors figuring most prominently in student decisions to continue with German are “good progress in German,” “interesting classes,” “comfortable German class,” “love of German,” and “opportunities to live/work in Germany.” The average scores for these five factors are significantly higher ( $p < .01$ ) than “encouragement by college professor,” “relevance to other academic subjects,” “extracurricular activities in German,” and “German-related scholarship.”

Making “good progress in German” is the most important factor in decisions to continue with German study beyond the language requirement. Ossipov (2000) found similar results in a 1996 survey of French students at Arizona State University that focused on the reasons prompting students to take more French courses; the wish to gain fluency received students’ highest rating. In contrast to fluency, the aim of good progress seems open to a wider range of interpretations.

Because progress for most students means increased language competence in realistic, practical situations, well-articulated undergraduate programs in German need to address this concern.

The second-most important factor in continuing the study of German, “interesting classes,” is a nebulous designation whose simplest interpretation might be to link it to the previous item: a class is interesting once it is perceived as contributing to the overall goal of making good progress in German. But, based on the tenor of our survey results, we consider it just as likely that “interesting classes” might involve the study of the humanities and practicing their spirit of inquiry by means of German.

The item “comfortable German classes,” another affective factor that positively influences students’ decision to study German, is also open to interpretation. Certainly students would want to study in a comfortable, supportive atmosphere in which they are not afraid to make mistakes or take risks. That such a large number of students considers this item a motivating factor in persevering with German suggests that many instructors have succeeded in creating comfortable learning environments. Nonetheless, we occasionally need to remind ourselves not to relax in promoting a nonthreatening atmosphere in our classes. This does not mean that conflicts need to be kept at bay, at least not the kind of conflict inherent in the multicultural world that Kramsch advocates as a starting point for engagement with an FL (1993, 1995; see also Trommler 2002). Obviously, however, “good progress,” “interesting classes,” “comfortable German classes,” and “love of German” contribute significantly to positive attitudes rather than to conflictual stances toward German. Students will not be likely to develop positive attitudes toward German if they experience excessive language frustration, if they continuously yawn or let their minds wander during uninteresting classes, or if they associate the study of German with a tension-packed environment.

Results show that 75% of the surveyed students regarded “good progress in German” and “interesting classes” either Important or Very Important determinants in decisions to pursue the study of German—thereby bringing the average score of these items to particularly high figures (3.13 and 3.09, respectively). These average scores are significantly higher than the average scores for all other items in this section of the questionnaire ( $p < .01$ ). In contrast, the 50% of respondents giving the same high ratings to “opportunities to live/work in Germany” indicates a steep decline of support for this item as a motivating factor. Even so, the relatively high average score of 2.71 for “opportunities to live/work in Germany” indicates that it represents an attractive prospect for a significant number of students (29% marked it as Very Important).

The survey items ranked as less important than those listed above in influencing students to continue with German after the completion of a language requirement include “relevance to my major,” “encouragement by college professor,” “relevance to other academic subjects,” “extracurricular activities in German,” and “German-related scholarship.” The fact that “relevance to my major” and “relevance to other academic subjects” garner 40% and 36% of the Important and Very Important ratings, respectively, suggests that more students attach intrinsic value to the study of German than we might have assumed. These results reinforce the need for increased interdisciplinary articulation of German curricula.

“Encouragement by college professor,” “extracurricular activities in German,” and “German-related scholarship”—all factors intended to promote the voluntary study of German beyond the introductory FL requirement—are the three least important factors for continuing with German. Though encouragement by a professor may be very valuable in individual cases, 50% of respondents rated it either Not Important or Not Applicable. In addition, it is likely that the high percentage of Not Applicable responses (30%) indicates that many students have never received a professor’s encouragement to continue with German. Though students may view the role of college faculty primarily as conducting interesting classes and assuring a comfortable academic environment, there is certainly no harm in instructors continuing to encourage students to extend German study, particularly if they have discovered effective ways to do so.

Despite the low importance the survey data assigns “extracurricular activities in German” as motivators, we do not recommend less attention to extracurricular activities. At advanced stages of German study, when students often form small communities based on common interests, these activities actually become more important. Nor should we curb our advertisements of study abroad opportunities, even if only a small number of students take advantage of them. Often exuding infectious enthusiasm for German, students returning from study abroad tend to turn into effective spokespersons for German. In general, though, it is noteworthy that practical reasons, such as seeking scholarship and work opportunities by means of German, do not play a major role in choosing to continue with German. Instead, students are most exacting in what they wish from the German classes in which they enroll: interesting content pursued in a supportive environment.

## Motivating Factors in the German Curriculum

Table 4 summarizes the results of Section 4 of the questionnaire, which focuses on students’ assessments of the importance of factors pertaining to the content and components of their post-secondary German courses.

It has become a common perception that language learners simply want to speak the FL well. Thus it is of no surprise that students gave the highest rating—not merely in this section but in the entire survey—to “learn to communicate (speak).” Furthermore, “learn to read and write in German” rates almost as highly as speaking. Unquestionably, acquiring measurable skills in German—whether spoken or written—is a goal that resonates particularly strongly with students.

In comparison to the two skills-oriented items ranking highest in Table 4, enthusiasm for content-oriented items pales, but only at first glance. Whereas 88% of the students rate the speaking skill and 87% the reading and writing skills as either Important or Very Important, fewer students place such heavy importance on the specific content areas highlighted in the survey (history, current events, and literature). Nevertheless, more than half of the students surveyed rate “study German history” (56%), “discuss current events” (56%), and “read German literature” (55%) as Important or Very Important. In fact, each of the three content areas is strongly supported by the majority of the students surveyed, receiving average scores ranging from 2.66 to 2.69.

**Table 4**  
 Motivating Factors in the German Curriculum

Item	1 <sup>a</sup>	2	3	4	Not Applicable	Average score
Learn to communicate (speak) ( <i>n</i> = 490)	3%	5%	26%	62%	4%	3.54
Learn to read and write in German ( <i>n</i> = 490)	3%	8%	31%	56%	2%	3.43
Study German history ( <i>n</i> = 489)	14%	27%	31%	25%	3%	2.69
Discuss current events ( <i>n</i> = 488)	15%	25%	34%	24%	3%	2.69
Read German literature ( <i>n</i> = 490)	15%	28%	31%	24%	3%	2.66
Learn German for my job ( <i>n</i> = 478)	22%	18%	21%	22%	17%	2.51

*a. 1 = Not Important, 2 = Somewhat Important, 3 = Important, 4 = Very Important*

In marked contrast to the skills and content factors, the item “learn German for my job” was assigned much lower importance, receiving an average answer of 2.51. Only 43% of the students ranked this factor as Important or Very Important, and 22% ranked it as Not Important. Again, German for practical, professional purposes does not figure prominently in student motivation and decision making. The expertise students wish in these skills seems to be prompted by affective factors rather than by more pragmatically determined, utilitarian goals.

## Conclusions: Implications for Curricular Reform and Language Program Directors

Our survey of a large sample of college students elicited student opinions on the factors that led them to enter their first college class in German and on the factors motivating them to continue German study beyond the language requirement. This survey is significant because it provides empirical data that considers the crucial role of the learner and the learner’s experience in shaping German curricula and in contributing to successfully articulated programs. In a process-oriented curriculum where students do not receive knowledge about language forms for replication purposes but learn to create meaning through language use over an extended time span, the focus of articulation shifts to the learner’s experience. Determining learner responses to German study, as our survey has done, thus becomes crucial to configuring integrated curricula and to constructing successfully articulated language programs.

Our survey results indicate that affective reasons for starting the study of German, such as fun and liking languages in general, overshadow pragmatic reasons. In fact, considering the relatively low ratings given to items such as career benefits as motivating factors for the study of German, we maintain that this aspect of FL study has been excessively stressed in advertising campaigns for German, particularly in those aimed at college students.

The results of our study have the most repercussions on the shaping of the undergraduate curriculum. They indicate that culture or literature courses should not isolate content from the language in which it is embedded, just as language activities on the introductory and intermediate levels should not be divorced from meaningful content.

Highly ranked motivating factors such as “interesting classes” and “love of German” can productively be associated with the content areas of history, current events, and literature. Interesting classes in these areas, enriched by level-appropriate skills development, can be conducive to nurturing the love of German that students have already acquired. When envisioning interesting classes as content instruction in a vertical continuum not segregated from the language constructing its meaning, our data supports and validates previous research (Bernhardt 1998; Byrnes 2001a, 2001b; Kramsch 1995; Swaffar 1998, 1999) urging the reshaping of post-secondary language instruction into an integrated continuum. Indeed, if the goal of our discipline “is to enable students to do things with words and to recover what has been done with words, socially, historically, politically, and interpersonally,” then “the job of foreign language instruction at all levels is to present ways in which arbitrary signs” in language “function as systems that do things with words aesthetically, culturally, linguistically, and socially” (Swaffar 1999, p. 7). These ideas, developed in previous literature and corroborated by the survey data presented here, should form the basis for curricular reform that may ensure the smooth vertical and interdisciplinary articulation of FL programs.

A first step in the direction of curricular reform is to heed Byrnes's (2001a) and Swaffar's (1998) call to adopt and adapt the *Standards for Foreign Language Learning* (ACTFL 1996) on the collegiate level or, at the very least, to focus on the fluid learning processes informing the Standards. The type of holistic learning the Standards envision will necessarily lead to interdisciplinary articulation, to the interplay of language learning in its many dimensions with other disciplines. Still, as Byrnes points out, regardless of the high praise the Standards merit for “innovative intentions,” they still rely “on the ACTFL proficiency construct which is, inherently, a grammar driven construct, its laudable communicative intentions notwithstanding” (2001b). Stressing the fundamental importance of selection and sequencing in curricular development, Byrnes proposes a genre- and task-based curriculum model (2001a, 2001b) that joins content and language throughout the learning process. Because issues of selection and sequencing lie at the heart of any curricular reform, we recommend Byrnes' model as a possible solution to the dilemma of how to spiral language and content into an articulated undergraduate FL program.

The language program director (LPD) is a key player in the shaping and implementation of this kind of curricular reform. The LPD should be viewed as the

professional who helps others interweave language and content, who guides others to realize what one can do with words socially, culturally, and aesthetically (Swaffar 1999). As coordinators of introductory- or intermediate-language programs, LPDs are in a pivotal position to ensure that students are prepared for the more in-depth approach to the development of content knowledge, using their ever-increasing proficiency skills at more advanced levels of the undergraduate program. In this regard, Byrnes' proposal to couple genre and tasks across the curriculum seems to provide the most promising model for the LPD. Using this model as a guide, the LPD can create a well-sequenced, task-based curriculum at the introductory and intermediate levels that spirals language and content, paves the way to successful vertical articulation, and links to other disciplines such as history, cultural studies, and literature. In addition to shaping a coherent curriculum that assures successful articulation, the LPD may function as a mediator among language, literature, and culture faculty in a department (Guthrie 2001, pp. 43–44; Murillo, this volume). By exerting considerable influence on curriculum development and implementation, the LPD contributes to the successful articulation of German programs and influences student motivation in German courses and thus German enrollments.

## Notes

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1. Available from authors.
2. Students in the high school survey also did not mark these factors highly, yet sex differences were noted. In particular, males considered it more important to take German if their friends were taking it (Andress et al. 2002, p. 9).

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