

Alumna earns German Embassy Teacher of Excellence Award

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University of Wisconsin Oshkosh alumna Janelle Morgan '06, is being recognized by the German Embassy for her work in the classroom.

Morgan, who studied German and secondary education at UW Oshkosh, was recently recognized as one of three recipients of the 2012 German Embassy Teacher of Excellence Award.

The award recognizes German teachers who effectively use modern technological teaching methods in their classroom and instill noticeable motivation in their students to learn and understand the German language and culture. The German Embassy, alongside the Goethe-Institute and the American Association of Teachers of German, has awarded the recognition since 2008.

Morgan was recognized for her work at the Milwaukee School of Languages, or MSL, where she teaches German to sixth, seventh and eighth grade students. She said the school, which was ranked the seventh best high school in Wisconsin by *U.S. News and World Report*, is unique because it focuses on world languages as part of the school's core curriculum.

"Our rigorous academic curriculum prepares students to be globally competitive," Morgan said.

MSL is part of a greater school system that provides students with a second-language education throughout their school career.

Among Morgan's accomplishments at MSL is her creation of a high school exchange program between MSL and Hildesheim, Germany; she's also worked to bring the first level of the German Language Diploma to her school.

Morgan's students at MSL take a national exam administered by the American Association of Teachers of German. She said her eighth grade students take the level three exam and often score within the top 10 percent in the state, with some ranking nationally. Part of Morgan's effectiveness as a teacher comes from the use of modern teaching technology such as the Smart Board, an interactive whiteboard that utilizes touch detection technology.

While at UW Oshkosh, Morgan studied abroad in Magdeburg, Germany for a full year. Morgan said her experience abroad affirmed her passion for the German language and culture.

Elizabeth Wade-Sirabian, UW Oshkosh professor of German and chair of the department of foreign languages and literatures, said she worked closely with Morgan while preparing for her study abroad trip. She said Morgan's success is affirmation of both the German program's effectiveness and the high quality of teacher preparation offered by the College of Education and Human Services.

“We are very proud of Janelle’s award and are thrilled with her success,” Wade-Sirabian said. “We take her accomplishment as an indication that our German education majors are not only prepared to pursue teaching careers, they are prepared to use their education to excel in the profession.”

After graduating from UW Oshkosh, Morgan became a Fulbright English Teaching Assistant in Austria from 2006 to 2008, and, in 2010, she participated in a two-week professional development program in Berlin called, “Neuer Blick, Neue Stimmen,” meaning “New View, New Voices.” Morgan’s education has not stopped there; she recently earned a master’s degree in education from Mount Mary College.

Morgan said foreign language study is an important aspect of a student’s education.

“When students have a global perspective and empathy for others different than themselves, it will prepare them for the future,” she said. “Learning a foreign language helps them embrace diversity and create cultural understanding.”

Wade-Sirabian said learning a foreign language also helps graduating college students in their job hunt and provides them with a broader cultural knowledge.

“In general, knowing a foreign language broadens one’s employment opportunities, but it also gives one access to other cultures and other ways of understanding the world around us,” she said.

In addition to German, the University provides this valuable education in Arabic, Chinese, French, Japanese, Russian and Spanish. Morgan said her personal education experiences at UW Oshkosh played a beneficial role in her continued study of German.

“UW Oshkosh provided a good foundation for my language skills and my study abroad opportunities strengthened my education,” she said.

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