

# Czech Language News

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## Message from the President

At last year's AATSEEL conference, we held a roundtable on Czech studies in the United States. The goal was to explore and contrast the variety of Czech programs across the US and to discuss the challenges that fields perceived as "small" or "marginal" can face in an era of contracting budgets. Also present on the panel was Vilma Anýžová, the new cultural attaché at the Czech Embassy in Washington. As we learned, the Embassy has also seen a change at the ambassadorial level, with Petr Kolář arriving at the end of 2005.

A surprise treat was in store for panel members and audience, when the Embassy invited us for a brief visit and meeting with the Ambassador the following day. We toured the Embassy premises and spoke with the Ambassador, his wife, and Jaroslav Kurfurst, chief deputy and political counselor. The faculty in attendance were tremendously gratified by this show of support and for the chance to have our photos taken with Masaryk.

Among the subjects we discussed at the panel and during the visit were ways in which the Embassy and our higher education institutions could interact for mutual benefit. The Embassy pointed out that the Ambassador and other members of the Embassy staff regularly make visits around the US, some of which could be combined with a visit to universities where Czech is taught. Such a visit could help provide moral support to a subject perceived by many university administrators as "marginal." In addition, the Embassy often hosts visits from Czech scholars, artists, and politicians. With a bit of advance planning, universities could coordinate with the Embassy to bring these eminent cultural figures to our campuses. Such an arrangement would be beneficial for all parties.

We have passed the details of as many Czech programs as we know of to the Czech Embassy, but we would urge you to be pro-active about cooperation. If your university is planning to bring someone over, or if you have some funds at your disposal, which are not quite sufficient to sponsor an entire trip, it would be worth making the Embassy aware of the opportunity. Please see their website: <http://www.mzv.cz/wwwo/?zu=washington>

2006 will be a year of changes for IATC. I'm stepping down as president in December after six years, and it is likely that there will be vacancies coming up on our Executive Board. If you're interested in getting involved in the running of IATC, please do get in touch and I can fill you in.

Neil Bermel  
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