

***What do the GACC Career Services Director and German ICE trains have in common?
Both have been instrumental in improving Germans' mobility since the spring of 1991!***

At the end of this year, the German American Chamber of Commerce New York will be saying goodbye to Thomas Dzimian, Director of Career Services, as he is set to retire after 27 years of service.

Tom was hired by the Chamber in April of 1991, the same year that Germany introduced its iconic ICE trains. While the trains continue to serve the German public, Tom will retire after having led the chamber's highly regarded J-1 visa program – the key to thousands of transatlantic exchanges -- for over a quarter century.

With a BA in Political Science from Canisius College and a Masters in German from Middlebury, Tom participated in an exchange program at Johannes Gutenberg Universität in Mainz. He could have spent his time socializing with the many American military personnel there at that time, but he gravitated to the native Germans; he wanted to perfect his language skills. This time abroad led to a career as a teacher. He taught German in Buffalo, New York, for several years, and it was while teaching there that he met his wife, Uli, a German exchange student. Though they have spent their lives in Connecticut, Tom and Uli were married in Dortmund.

Making a career change from teaching, Mr. Dzimian started with the Chamber in April of 1991 as a Sales Executive for KoelnMesse. From there he transferred internally to work for Educational Services in 1992, which later became the Career Services department. In 1994 Educational Services grew by 35%, with the majority of the growth in the new intern matching program which Tom helped build. By 1995, Career Services had matched 150 German students to internships in the US. However, the department had no way of acquiring visas for the interns they matched. The success of this internship program led Tom to apply for designation from the U.S. government to be a J-1 visa sponsor, a feature of the Chamber's services ever since.

In 1996 Tom Dzimian was promoted to the Director of Educational Services, and in this same year the Chamber received its designation from the United States Information Agency or USIA (the J-1 visa programs were later moved under the State Department's authority by President Clinton). In the first year, Tom processed 12 visa applications. As he now fondly recalls: "It was just me and a typewriter..." though by 1998 his department (now called Career Services) had sponsored 95 visas. In 2018, Career Services is set to issue well over 10 times that many.

In the 1990s and early 2000s, the J-1 program grew by leaps and bounds during strong economic times. In 2001, Tom spearheaded cooperation with other bilateral European chambers of commerce to share best practices and information on visa issues. This binational group was especially important in facing challenges and building community after 9/11 and the economic recession of 2008. The group still meets today. "Tom has been a true leader in the international exchange community for years; not only a leader but a friend and mentor to many of us. We will miss his good humor and guidance," reflected Christopher Gallagher, one of

Tom's binational group counterparts at that time and a current member of the GACC NY Career Services team.

The success of the J-1 program grew the Career Services department, and as of today it is the department's largest and most successful program. In recent years Tom has developed a close relationship with universities and companies in his home state of Connecticut; educating them on vocational trainee programs using the German model.

After more than 20 years as director, Tom has grown the department's services to include outbound programs, a talent network and job recruitment, university relations, summer programs in Germany for students, and more. We recognize and appreciate all that Tom has done for the Chamber, and we wish him a happy and well-deserved retirement!