English and Spanish at a university program in translating and interpreting in her homeland. "I was lucky to have had excellent professors who worked with us very closely," she explains. "Soon after my studies, I knew Spanish was the language I wanted to focus on. That experience also taught me to appreciate the importance of the teaching profession and how it can impact the lives of students."

The university in Slovakia provided opportunities for Domcekova to participate in study abroad programs in Cuba and at the University of Pittsburgh in the U.S. After receiving her undergraduate degree, she came to the United States to work on her master's, and, at the same time, received tuition reimbursement as a teaching assistant in Spanish.

"It was never my intention to remain in the U.S., although I was intrigued with teaching in the university system here," she remembers. "After I earned my Ph.D. in Florida, I applied to several colleges and decided to accept an offer at BSC. I felt it would be a good fit." Apparently, so did BSC, which honored her with the inaugural Bob Whetstone Faculty Development Award for teaching excellence during the college's 2000 Awards Day Convocation. This year, Domcekova received the Foreign Language Teacher Award from the Alabama Association of Foreign Language Teachers.

Domcekova says, "People are curious about me when they find out what I do because it is so unlikely that someone from Slovakia would be teaching Spanish. But because I had to learn English and Spanish from "scratch," I feel that I have a unique perspective of these two languages that I find helpful when I teach."

Domcekova is committed to doing her part with the Latin American Studies program to help Birmingham-Southern achieve its goal of being the top liberal arts college in the nation. She says she is increasingly developing a devotion to Panther basketball, as well. "Although I am a University of Florida alum and Florida Gator, I'll have to admit that my loyalties are shifting a bit."

Domcekova expresses gratitude for the newly renovated Neal and Anne Berte Humanities Center, which houses her office. "I am excited about the pleasant working environment around us," she says. "The larger offices are particularly important for us when we work with students because it allows us to sit down with them, focus on their work, and have consultations with them. The students really are enjoying it, too, along with their new Foreign Languages Lab. The lab is essential now that we rely on technology more for language learning. The lab director works with humanities professors closely and is very helpful."

In the future, Domcekova envisions more diversity on the campus in the form of international students from Latin America and other parts of the world. "I would like to see us sending more students abroad and see us getting involved in cultural exchange programs," she says. "Not only is it an amazing experience for Latin American students to come here, but those programs also do so much for our own students." Plus, Domcekova says she loves traveling herself and is happy that BSC has given her those opportunities. So far, she's been to Cuba, El Salvador, Puerto Rico, Costa Rica, Chile, and Peru.

"I am very lucky and proud to have the gift of speaking different languages,"