

ATS receives supplemental grant for *Pathways for Tomorrow* Initiative

By LISA KERN

The Association of Theological Schools (ATS) was recently awarded a five-year supplemental grant of \$4.75 million by Lilly Endowment Inc. to further support its coordination work with the Pathways for Tomorrow Initiative.

The purpose of the supplemental grant is four-fold: 1) to ensure that the present coordination program will have adequate resources to support the Phase 2 expansion of the initiative from 80 schools to 105 schools, 2) to provide support for Phase 3 of the initiative, which now includes 16 schools, 3) to extend programming through 2027 to support the additional Phase 2 and Phase 3 awarded in 2022, and 4) to increase funding designed to make learnings from the *Pathways* grantees available to the wider ATS membership.

While Phase 2 of the initiative focused on grants to individual schools, the new Phase 3 focuses on larger collaborative projects.

“Theological schools play an essential role in ensuring that Christian congregations have a steady stream of well-prepared leaders to guide their ministries,” said Christopher L. Coble, the Endowment’s vice president for religion. “Many theological schools believe that their paths to the future depend on their abilities to form strategic partnerships with other schools and church agencies. These grants will help seminaries develop innovative and collaborative approaches to theological education that we believe will strengthen their efforts to prepare and support excellent leaders for Christian communities into the future.”

The *Pathways* initiative was created to support graduate theological schools as they:



PATHWAYS *for* TOMORROW *Coordination Program*

- assess the effectiveness of current educational and financial practices,
- explore the challenges and opportunities facing pastors and lay leaders in congregations,
- clarify and/or realign their missions to meet these challenges and opportunities,
- design and implement projects to increase educational effectiveness and financial sustainability, and
- build or strengthen collaborations that will strengthen the broader educational and financial ecology of ministry.

ATS currently provides resources, research, support, and a learning community for the Phase 2 grantees focused on innovation, collaboration, and adaptive learning. During the past several years, ATS has been learning from, for, and with its member schools about effective educational models and practices, the economic challenges facing their students and institutions, cultivating intercultural competencies, the challenges facing senior

leaders, and redeveloping standards of accreditation that support quality and innovation. Through the coordination program, ATS is continuing to leverage its learning as a key resource for grantees as they seek to discern their pathways for tomorrow.

“ATS has also been developing new resources to support strategic decision making and innovation including data visualization, hybrid programming, and the forming of a team whose work focuses on strategic assessment through iterative learning,” said Jo Ann Deasy, director

of institutional initiatives and student research at ATS, who manages the coordination program for the *Pathways for Tomorrow* Initiative. “ATS will continue to strengthen these resources and its capacity to serve as a model for innovation in theological education.”

Lilly Endowment Inc. launched the *Pathways* initiative in January 2021 because of its longstanding interest in supporting efforts to enhance and sustain the vitality of Christian congregations by strengthening the leadership capacities of pastors and congregational lay leaders.



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