

Who Are We? A 5-Phase Approach to Discovery in an ATS School

When an ATS school engages in a strategic-visioning process, it is important to hear external perspectives to help place the school in the broader landscape of North American theological education.

Designed over his twenty years with ATS, ATS Senior Director & COO Chris Meinzer has developed a five-phase approach to complement the strategic planning process of a member school and help the school consider important issues of stewardship around mission & money. As an external consultant with a broad view of the ATS membership, he will:

- Phase 1** Work with the CEO and other administrators to gain an understanding of the institution over the last decade. Utilizing the ATS [Strategic Information Report](#) (SIR), the team will perform a SWOT analysis of the institution's resources. Cost of this phase would be \$0 and it would be facilitated as an e-meeting.

- Phase 2** Develop a presentation from Phase 1 that places the institution in the broader context of theological education in North America. Utilizing ATS-reported data, the presentation will show trends in broad industry context, peer subsets, and institution-specific ways. The presentation in this phase would be given to the CEO and administration and can be expanded to include faculty and staff, as deemed appropriate. Cost for this phase would be \$1000 payable to ATS plus any travel expenses.

- Phase 3** Progressing from Phase 2, the presentation will be used to expand the board's understanding of the context of theological education, the distinctiveness of the particular institution, and the importance of stewardship of the mission and resources to fulfill the mission. The presentation will be offered to the CEO and board. Cost for this phase would be \$500 payable to ATS plus any travel expenses.

- Phase 4** Facilitate conversations with the CEO, administration, and others to take this understanding of the institution in the broader context and move the institution forward, establishing benchmarks and key performance indicators (KPIs) that measure success toward institutional strategic goals. Cost for this phase would be \$1000 payable to ATS plus any travel expenses.

- Phase 5** Develop and create a visual dashboard, along with the staff from the institution. The dashboard would be utilized by the school going forward. Cost for this phase would be \$500 payable to ATS and would be facilitated as an e-meeting.

If you are interested in discussing or scheduling any of the phases, please contact Chris Meinzer at meinzer@ats.edu or call 412-788-6505 x232.

Testimonials about Mission & Money and the 5-Phase Approach presentations...

An ATS member school president:

Thank you again, for the marvelous presentation you offered today to our staff and faculty. I have continued to receive many words of appreciation throughout the afternoon for your time with us. It was exactly what I had hoped for—and more! Your expertise inspires confidence, and the "just right" humor you bring made the presentation very user-friendly. I wanted our community to gain a perspective on the school from someone outside with the big picture in relation to other ATS schools. As I indicated afterward, I especially appreciated the photos you used at the end of the presentation and the insight you gave about how best to approach our ongoing effort to establish a sustainable model and best practices. Your gracious spirit and your encouragement left us all feeling very (realistically) good about where we are.

An ATS member school president:

Your presentation at our strategic planning retreat provided exactly the institutional data that our trustees and faculty needed. Your clear presentation of solid data allowed us to correct some misperceptions of our situation. While one might expect a presentation with charts and numbers to be dry and uninspiring, your humor and engaging manner set the stage for fruitful dialogue. You, as a person of faith, made the connection between mission and money which is how we want our leaders to discern the future.

An ATS member school president:

ATS collects and shares a massive amount of data and, if you're like me, you don't have time to figure out what story any of it is trying to tell. One hour with Chris and my leadership team and I have a much better idea of what the data really means, what we can be proud of, and where we need to make changes. Good strategic planning will take many hours. This should be the first one.

An ATS member school board chair:

Thank you so much for being with the board. You do such a great job of presenting lots of information and encouraging good conversation. The trustees really appreciated thinking about the trends, and the conversations continued throughout the rest of the meeting.

An ATS member school academic dean:

I do want to say again also that I really appreciate your style of presentation and communication. You have an open, straightforward, non-threatening, honest, and committed engagement with your listeners. It invites us into a thoughtful conversation on these important issues.

An ATS member school academic dean:

Thank you so much for your excellent presentation today at our board meeting. It was superb in every way. Both board members and our team raved about the depth and clarity of your presentation and the helpfulness of your comments in the discussion.