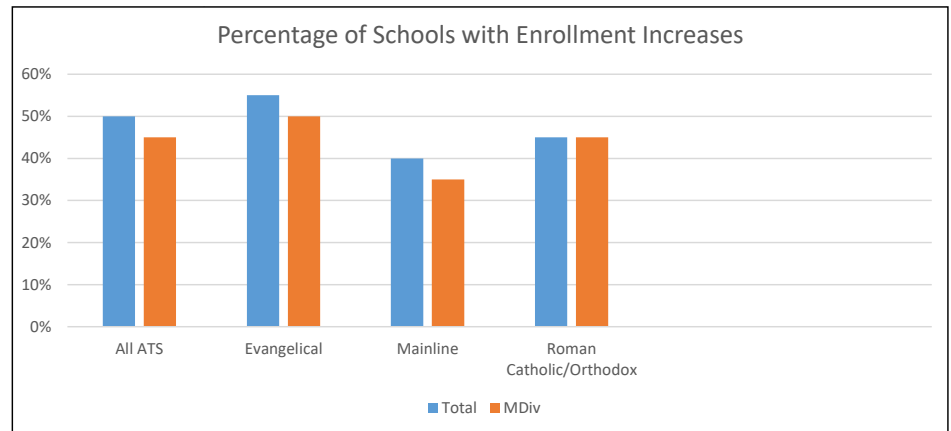


# A closer look at enrollment

By CHRIS MEINZER

Last month, ATS reported that projections for enrollment revealed a fourth straight year of stability across the overall ATS membership in terms of total head count. The data collection process is not yet complete, so our current analysis re-

mains at a high level. When the Annual Report Forms are all in and the Annual Data Tables have been calculated, a slight increase in total students enrolled in ATS schools is expected, with about half of the membership experiencing enrollment increases.



Even with this increase in overall student enrollment, there are some underlying trends that are worth noting. The chart below shows the percentage of schools that have had enrollment increases between fall 2016 and fall 2017. For example, 50% of all ATS schools had enrollment increases in total enrollment, and 45% of all ATS schools had enrollment increases in the MDiv.

An analysis of this trend by ecclesial family depicts a substantially different picture. For *evangelical* Protestant schools, at least half of the schools experienced enrollment increases in every degree category, and 55%

reported increases in total enrollment. For *mainline* Protestant schools, less than half of the schools experienced enrollment increases in each degree category except for professional MA and advanced professional degrees, leading to only 40% of the mainline schools reflecting increases in total enrollment. The picture is similar in Roman Catholic and Orthodox schools in that fewer than half of the schools had enrollment increases within degree categories except for professional MA and Academic MA degrees, leading to only 45% of these schools reflecting increases in total enrollment.

**Percentage of schools showing enrollment increases from Fall 2016 to Fall 2017**

	All ATS	Evangelical	Mainline	Roman Catholic/Orthodox
Total	50%	55%	40%	45%
MDiv	45%	50%	35%	45%
Prof MA	55%	55%	55%	60%
Acad MA	55%	65%	45%	55%
Adv Prof	60%	60%	65%	45%
Adv Acad	50%	65%	45%	35%
Other	45%	50%	45%	35%

The MDiv degree continues to show enrollment pressure, with the projected number of students enrolled expected to go from about 29,400 in fall 2016 to about 28,600 in fall 2017, representing an expected change of about -2.7%. While this is true, still about half of evangelical schools experienced enrollment increases in the MDiv. The overall enrollment decline continues to be driven by losses in mainline schools where only about one-third of the schools reflected MDiv enrollment increases, leaving two-thirds of all mainline schools showing MDiv enrollment declines. The MDiv remains the largest degree category, representing less than 40% of total enrollment, so declines in this degree category will most certainly have an impact on overall enrollment. Only a decade ago, the MDiv represented closer to 45% of total enrollment, but the decreases in student enrolled in the MDiv coupled with

the ongoing increases in MA degree enrollment will only mean that the MDiv enrollment will further decline in terms of overall enrollment.

It is anticipated that the final enrollment data will be available in mid-February. The ATS Institutional Peer Profile Reports (IPPR) and Strategic Information Reports (SIR) should be produced and sent to chief executive

officers via email in early March. Be on the lookout for these important reports, as they will provide benchmarking data that can be useful in assessing your own insti-

tution's enrollment against peers and the broader ATS membership. If you have questions about your enrollment or other institutional data or questions about your IPPR and SIR, please contact me at [meinzer@ats.edu](mailto:meinzer@ats.edu).

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