

May 8, 2020

Dear member colleagues of The Association of Theological Schools and the Commission on Accrediting:

I am writing with an update on the 2020 ATS/COA Biennial Meeting. The purpose of this memo is twofold: 1) to provide the agenda for the Biennial Meeting; and 2) to give a more detailed description of the meeting itself.

Agenda for the Biennial Meeting – The agenda for the 2020 Biennial Meeting is in the attached program book. You can also view the agenda through the event listing on the Association’s website. The program book contains information on the work of the Association and Commission for the past biennial cycle, 2018–2020. The book also has important reports for the business meetings, in which the membership will vote on significant items.

The Biennial Meeting – In my April communication, I shared with the membership that the Vancouver venue for the Biennial Meeting had been canceled and that the meeting would be completely online with an electronic voting option. I had also asked the membership to hold the dates of June 24–25, 2020. We regretted not having the option to meet in-person in Vancouver, knowing that the Biennial Meeting is much more than business meetings of the Association and Commission. We are also thankful that we have the capacity to host an online meeting. I am grateful to the ATS Board of Directors, the Board of Commissioners, and the ATS staff for their commitments to both quality and flexibility throughout this global health crisis created by COVID-19.

Here are some summary points you should know:

Theme. The theme of the 2020 Biennial Meeting is **Quality. Clarity. Flexibility: Re-envisioning Theological Education for a New Generation**. These three words—quality, clarity, flexibility—are themes within the *Standards of Accreditation* themselves and were prominent within the extensive feedback sessions that the Redevelopment Task Force hosted over the past two years. These three themes have had heightened significance in the past two months as member schools sought to respond to COVID-19. At the upcoming 2020 Biennial Meeting, this two-year process of redeveloping the *Standards* will reach its completion. The Commission will be making a once-in-a-generation vote to approve the new *Standards*, new policies in the *Policies and Procedures*, and corollary changes to revised *Commission Bylaws*. This is an important meeting with a historically significant vote.

Online Meeting. Due to the current pandemic, the 2020 Biennial Meeting will be completely online.

- The Biennial Meeting will be conducted online through the Zoom webinar platform.

- The business of the Association and the Commission will be divided into in four sessions (see the agenda in the attached program book or in the event listing on the Association's [website](#)).

Wednesday, June 24, 2020

- Association Opening Plenary and Business Session I
- Commission Opening Plenary and Business Session I

Thursday, June 25, 2020

- Commission Business Session II
- Association Business Session II

- Only voting members for the Association and the Commission will be registered for their respective meetings within the Zoom webinar platform. This was necessary to preserve the integrity of the voting process for both the Association's and the Commission's business (for more about registration and voting, see below).
- The Biennial Meeting will be live-streamed on the web. Personnel from member schools, affiliates of ATS, the general public, and other non-voting interested parties are welcome to watch the proceedings. A link to the live-streamed event will be shared closer to the meeting dates.

Registration. Registration will be opening next week.

- The invitation to register will be sent to the chief executive officers of member schools.
- Registration into the Zoom webinar business sessions will be limited to one designated voter from each institution.
- In line with past practice, the chief executive officer can either be the designated voter or can appoint one from the school to vote on the institution's behalf.
- As stated above, the Biennial Meeting will be live-streamed so that personnel within member schools, ATS affiliates, the public, or other interested parties can watch the proceedings. No registration is necessary to watch the live-streamed event.

Voting. The 2020 Biennial Meeting will be using an electronic voting option for the business portions of the meeting.

- According to the *Bylaws* of both the Association and Commission, each member is entitled to one vote on each issue before the Association and Commission.
- The vote will be cast by the person authorized by the member institution, hereafter the designated voter.
- As stated above, the designated voter will be identified in the registration process, and only the designated voter will be registered into the Zoom sessions of the Association and Commission.
- The designated voters will be counted for the purposes of establishing a quorum, and only they can make motions and speak to motions.
- Voting will be conducted through the survey feature within Zoom webinars. A future email communication will be available with more detail about the voting mechanism within the Zoom webinar platform.

Online Pre-meetings. There will be a series of pre-meetings before the Biennial Meeting. Two such opportunities include:

- A pre-meeting series of engagements through the Association's learning management system. Sessions will include space for asynchronous feedback on questions related to the new *Standards*, the policies within the *Policies and Procedures*, and the revised *Commission Bylaws*. There will also be modules that will explore resources, education,

and support that is available to the membership through the Association's many offerings.

- Open forum sessions for questions and feedback on the new *Standards*, the policies within the *Policies and Procedures*, and the revised *Commission Bylaws*. These sessions will be by invitation only.

I am grateful to you, the members of The Association of Theological Schools and the Commission on Accrediting, for the flexibility and agility that you have all demonstrated in your institutions' responses to COVID-19. I am thankful, as well, for your willingness to engage in this important business of the Association and Commission in these uncertain times.

If you have any questions about the Biennial Meeting or the processes described above, please do not hesitate to reach out to us.

Sincerely,

Frank Yamada
Executive Director