

Annual data tables show notable enrollment changes across ATS schools

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Reversing a decade-long trend, more schools grew in enrollment this year than declined. This is according to the new ATS Annual Data Tables (ADT), published in March using data collected from the ATS membership in fall 2024. Nearly 50 tables and graphs reflect important data trends across North American graduate theological education.



ADT 1.2 shows publicly available institutional characteristics of each member school. ADT 2.12 also shows individual school data by head count and full-time equivalent en-

rollment within broad degree categories. Both ADT 1.2 and ADT 2.12 can be instructive when making some comparisons between your school and other schools.

Enrollment by degree category

ADT 2.2 shows head count enrollment across all member schools by degree category for the last five years. Some important trends have continued, and

some new trends have emerged. Trends will be noted before going deeper into the analysis.

Table 2.2 Head Count Enrollment								
All Member Schools								
Year	MDiv	MA	ThM/STM	DMin & Other Prof Dr	PhD/ThD	Total Degrees	Non-Degree	Total Enrollment
2020	30,455	27,267	1,250	10,332	3,939	73,243	4,348	77,591
2021	29,100	27,590	1,333	11,235	4,017	73,275	4,746	78,021
2022	27,709	27,796	1,315	11,702	4,113	72,635	4,694	77,329
2023	26,143	28,024	1,288	11,307	4,198	70,960	5,203	76,163
2024	26,082	29,440	1,183	11,494	4,471	72,670	6,345	79,015

• Master of Divinity (MDiv) enrollment has continued a steady decline, but the decline in 2024 is less pronounced. The decline between 2020–23 was more than 1,300 students annually, while the most recent

annual decline was about 60 students. The five-year change is down 14.4% even during a period where there has been fluctuation in the number of schools.

- MA enrollment has continued to increase steadily, and the increase in 2024 is more elevated. MA enrollment has been growing by about 200–300 students annually but grew by more than 1,400 students in the most recent year. The five-year change is up 8%.
- Doctor of Ministry (DMin) and other professional doctorate enrollment has been a bit of a roller coaster in the last five years. DMin enrollment has been a growth area for more than a decade, but as a degree category, it experienced a dip last year. In 2024, enrollment increased by almost 200 students. The five-year change is up 11.2%.
- PhD/Doctor of Theology (ThD) enrollment has been on a steady climb these last five years, with a larger bump in

2024. The five-year change is up 13.5%, with half of the increase coming in the most recent year.

- Non-degree enrollment has reflected the most dramatic shifts, with the current year growing by more than 1,100 students. The five-year change is up 45.9%, and most of this increase has occurred in the last two years.
- As evident in the chart below, the continual decline in MDiv enrollment has been offset by growth in other areas. The significant increase in 2024 total enrollment was impacted both by a smaller decline in MDiv enrollment and an increase in MA and non-degree enrollment. In the last five years, total enrollment has risen 1.8% across all ATS member schools.

All Member Schools								
Annual HC Change	MDiv	MA	ThM/STM	DMin & Other Prof Dr	PhD/ThD	Total Degrees	Non-Degree	Total Enrollment
2021	(1,355)	323	83	903	78	32	398	430
2022	(1,391)	206	(18)	467	96	(640)	(52)	(692)
2023	(1,566)	228	(27)	(395)	85	(1,675)	509	(1,166)
2024	(61)	1,416	(105)	187	273	1,710	1,142	2,852
5-year %change	-14.4%	8.0%	-5.4%	11.2%	13.5%	-0.8%	45.9%	1.8%

Enrollment by member school

As has been previously reported, 55% of ATS member schools reported year-over-year increases between fall 2023 and fall 2024. This is a higher percentage than what had been reflected over the last decade, when about 45% of member schools reported year-over-year increases. In the most recent year, more schools had positive enrollment results than have been normal for the last ten years. This is worth celebrating!

Within this overall trend, it is worth diving deeper into the data to analyze the changes.

- There were ten new schools that joined ATS and are reporting enrollment data for the first time. These schools represented 716 new students. As shown in the chart below, these schools added students within almost every degree category, with notable additions of 125 MDiv students and 382 MA students.

- There were 13 schools that had enrollment increases of more than 75 students, and they added 1,994 students altogether. These schools ranged in size, and the increase in their enrollments ranged from 3% to 34% from the prior fall. In total, the enrollment increases in these 13 schools represented 70% of the 2,852 enrollment increase noted in the Enrollment by Degree category charts. For example, they added 250 MDiv students and 1,095 MA students.
- Combined, the ten new schools and the 13 schools with enrollment increases of more than 75 students represent almost all of the enrollment increase from fall 2023 to fall 2024.
- There were five schools that had enrollment decreases of more than 50 students, and they collectively had an enrollment decrease of 341 students. These schools

ranged in size, and the decline in their enrollments ranged from 6% to 49% from the prior fall. In total, these schools were down in almost every degree category.

- Of the remaining 252 ATS member schools, the net change was just under 500 students. Overall, the median

change for these schools was an increase of three students, and the average was fewer than two students. In total, declines in MDiv students were offset by increases in non-degree students.

HC Change, Fall 2023 to Fall 2024	# schools	MDiv	MA	ThM/STM	DMin & Other Prof Dr	PhD/ThD	Total Degrees	Non-Degree	Total Enrollment
New Schools	10	125	382	-	90	81	678	38	716
Schools up 75 HC	13	250	1,095	(29)	162	130	1,608	386	1,994
Schools down 50 HC	5	(105)	(152)	1	(82)	1	(337)	(4)	(341)
All Other Schools	252	(331)	91	(77)	17	61	(239)	722	483
	280	(61)	1,416	(105)	187	273	1,710	1,142	2,852

Concluding thoughts

Some positive trends have been noted in enrollment across member schools in fall 2024. More schools grew this year (55%) than declined (45%), and that has reversed a decade-long trend. MA and non-degree enrollment expanded noticeably from fall 2023 to fall 2024. After accounting for ten new schools and 13 schools with significant enrollment increases, most ATS member schools maintained stable enrollment, with a median increase of about three students. This is a small but remarkable increase, as for more than a decade, this median assessment would have declined.

It is important for a member school to pay attention to these broader industry enrollment trends and to understand how the trends may be similar to or different from the trends within the institution. Leaders within a theological school must be honest and realistic about their school enrollment trends as they consider how to lead the institution forward. It would be important for schools that have continued enrollment declines through fall 2024 to honestly assess their enrollment trajectory given this

more positive news in enrollment data. *What specific factors are influencing school enrollment trends either positively or negatively? What decision(s) have we made recently that might be impacting those trends?*

ATS has resources that can help you assess your enrollment in light of broader industry trends. Certainly, the [ATS Annual Data Tables](#) can be an important tool (in particular, see ADT 1.2 and ADT 2.12). The [ATS Data Visualization Tool](#) provides another resource where school leaders can choose their own factors to analyze enrollment, admissions, completions, personnel, and finances. Finally, the [5-Phase Approach to Discovery](#) is a specifically tailored educational approach for school administration, faculty, staff, and boards to situate the school within the broader landscape of North American graduate theological education. Any of these resources can be utilized to gain a better understanding of trends within your institution. Feel free to contact me at meinzer@ats.edu if you would like help understanding your trends or any of these ATS tools.



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