

ATS analyzes fall 2021 enrollment trends of member schools

By CHRIS MEINZER

ATS requested expedited fall enrollment data from member schools to provide timely feedback as to the trajectory of enrollment for fall 2021. As of October 28, 2021, 225 schools—about 83% of the membership—reported data. As the remaining schools report, updated enrollment trends will be posted on Engage ATS and published in the next issue of Colloquy Online.



Of the 225 schools reporting, about 48% have shown enrollment increases and 52% have shown enrollment decreases. As you may recall, amid the pandemic in fall 2020, ATS schools had reversed a decade-long trend, with 55% of the schools showing enrollment increases and 45% showing decreases. If the current trend for fall 2021 holds, ATS schools will return to the pattern in which more schools decline than increase, which has occurred most of the last decade.

During the first year of the uncertainty of the global pandemic, ATS schools fared better in fall 2020 regarding enrollment than they had in preceding years. With perhaps some patterns of life returning to pre-pandemic

rhythms in Canada and in the US, it may be that enrollment patterns in ATS schools will also return to pre-pandemic trends.

Below is a chart that shows—through October 28, 2021—the percentage of schools with enrollment increases and decreases, the median change, and the percent reporting. The chart includes information for all ATS schools reporting to-date, as well as data by ecclesial family and structure.

With about 50 ATS schools still to report, it would not be surprising if the current trend holds. The academic and operational pivots that ATS schools had to make due to the pandemic have been considerable and ongoing.

	All ATS	Evangelical	Mainline	RC/Orthodox	Independent	Related
Increase	48%	54%	46%	36%	48%	48%
Decrease	52%	46%	54%	64%	52%	52%
Median Change	-1.0%	2.7%	-1.5%	-3.8%	-1.0%	-0.7%

With the enrollment data that is currently available, it appears that the positive enrollment trend of fall 2020 may not sustain into fall 2021. Presently, the 48% increase/52% decrease split is better than the 45% increase/55% decrease split seen within the last decade, but it is not as positive as the 55% increase/45%

decrease seen in fall 2020. As a result, ATS schools may require additional and continued adaptation as enrollment trends in theological schools impact their missions in the world.



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I like to know what you are thinking. Your good questions lead to further research and deeper insights. If you have specific questions or would like to pursue additional aspects of the enrollment data, please contact me at meinzer@ats.edu