

ATS announces new director of leadership development and institutional capacities

By HEATHER HARTUNG

The Association of Theological Schools (ATS) welcomes Melissa Snarr as the new director of leadership development and institutional capacities. This appointment expands the Association's ability to design, facilitate, and assess programs for presidents, deans, faculty, key staff, and emerging leaders in its member schools. Snarr began her role in July 2026.

Snarr brings a wealth of experience that will support, strengthen, and grow the leadership development programming offered to the ATS membership. Her work on these programs will involve creating collaborative learning experiences to foster vocational and institutional health and long-term sustainability, nurture transformative innovation, and enable the faithful stewardship of theological education.

"I look forward to listening deeply to our membership and helping leaders shape and share their insights and wise practices in order to enliven missional vitality across the sector," said Snarr.

Snarr comes to ATS after 23 years at Vanderbilt Divinity School where she was the E. Rhodes and Leona B. Carpenter Associate Professor of Ethics & Society. At Vanderbilt, she held multiple administrative roles, including associate dean and founding director of the DMin in Integrative Chaplaincy (in partnership with the Department of Veterans Affairs), and co-chaired university committees related to faculty development and institutional planning. She also served on the executive board of the Hispanic Summer Program and the Society of Christian Ethics and the steering committee of the ATS Chief Academic Officers' Society.

Trained as a Christian social ethicist and ethnographer, Snarr attends carefully to communities and thinks structurally with them about practices of institutional and



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community flourishing. She is author of two books and 23 articles related to worker justice, interfaith collaboration, and moral shocks.

Snarr holds a PhD from Emory University, an MDiv from Candler School of Theology, and a BA from Furman University. She is an active lay leader in the United Methodist Church's Tennessee-Western Kentucky Conference.

"Melissa brings vital experience as a chief academic officer, teacher, scholar, and program manager," said ATS Executive Director Frank M. Yamada. "ATS is delighted to welcome such a seasoned leader who is committed to serving our membership."



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