

ATS announces staff additions and transitions

By *MARISSA DECHANT*

The Association of Theological Schools (ATS) is pleased to announce several additions and transitions among its internal staff members.

The ATS Board of Directors has been identifying, iterating, and clarifying the Association's four strategic priorities: (1) Equip leaders for effective change, (2) Explore and encourage innovative financial and organizational models, (3) Enhance adaptive work in schools' educational missions, and (4) Engage the membership in its broad diversity. These ongoing staff changes strengthen ATS and better position it to fulfill these priorities.

"In conjunction with the strategic priorities and the direction approved by the ATS Board of Directors, the Association has been intentionally seeking ways to introduce new staff and to reposition current staff to enhance our collective skill set," said Chris Meinzer, ATS senior director and COO. "These current changes are part of our ongoing process to better serve the ATS membership today and into the future."



Staff additions

ATS is excited to welcome **Chelsea Yarborough** to the role of associate director of leadership programming. In this new role, she will work closely with Deborah Shadd, ATS director of leadership development, to

support a holistic approach to the Association's leadership development programming through the cultivation



and facilitation of robust communities of practice within the ATS membership.

"Chelsea brings a wealth of experience and a contagious enthusiasm with her to this work, along with a deep commitment to fostering real community and helping leaders thrive," said Shadd. "We are thrilled to have her join our team and excited about the programs we'll be able to build together to create ongoing, cross-functional leadership development opportunities for our schools."

Yarborough has extensive skill and experience in program management, relationship building, group facilitation, and pedagogical approaches—all of which are critical to leadership programming and professional development efforts. She comes to ATS from Phillips Theological Seminary, where she was assistant professor of African American Preaching, Sacred Rhetoric, and Black Practical Theology. She has also taught at Garrett Evangelical Theological Seminary and Wake Forest University School of Divinity. She earned her MDiv from Wake Forest University School of Divinity and her PhD from Vanderbilt University.

"We could not be more pleased with the appointment of Chelsea Yarborough, as she brings the right skills,

knowledge, and facilitating expertise for her role,” said Frank Yamada, ATS executive director. “The Association’s communities of practice will benefit from her leadership now and for years to come.”

Yarborough will begin at ATS on April 15. Together, she and Shadd will begin planning the upcoming leadership development programming year. Stay tuned for announcements coming from ATS for continuing programming for existing communities of practice as well as new opportunities that will be developed.



Renee Ross has joined the ATS staff as business and operations assistant. In this role, she will work with Meinzer to fulfill business, financial, operations, and personnel duties for both ATS and for the Commission on Accrediting (COA). She will support the \$10 million combined budget and nearly 30 employees of ATS in fulfillment of the ATS mission. In her part-time role, Ross will be the main person responsible for business transactions from processing through to supporting the annual audit.

“We are really excited to have Renee join the staff. She brings significant experience that will be beneficial to our work in support of the ATS and COA missions,” said Meinzer. “She will be an important partner in stewarding the resources of both organizations on behalf of our membership and our granting agencies.”

Ross is an experienced business professional who has managed business, payroll, human resources, legal, and

budget processes. Most recently, she worked at the nonprofit ComedySportz of Chicago—first as director of operations and, most recently, as executive director. She has a Master of Arts Management degree (Business and Entrepreneurship) from Columbia College Chicago and a Bachelor of Arts degree (Theater Arts and Acting) from Point Park University in Pittsburgh.

She began her role in support of ATS and COA earlier this month, returning to Pittsburgh after spending nearly a decade in Chicago.



Staff transition

Mary Boyle has been with ATS as part-time business office assistant since November 2019. In her role, she has been the primary person responsible for all of the business transactions for ATS and COA. She and

her husband moved to South Carolina nearly a year ago, which necessitated the hiring of a Pittsburgh-based business office person (see above).

Boyle will be training Ross throughout the spring semester while also beginning to transition to a different role within ATS—working with student data. This part-time position is more conducive to a non-Pittsburgh based role.

“Mary has been a great addition to the staff of ATS, and we are grateful that she is willing to continue in a different role,” said Meinzer.



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