

ATS enrollment trend snapshot: fall 2023

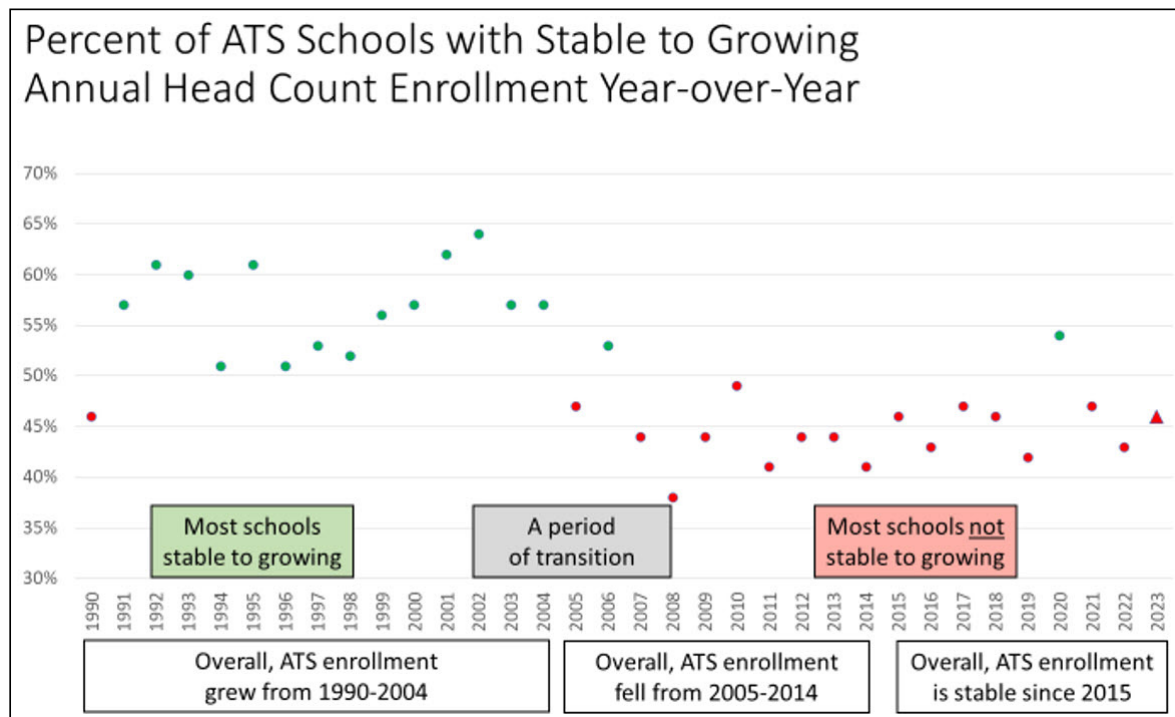
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As of late October, 236 ATS member schools have reported their fall 2023 enrollment numbers, which represents about 85% of the membership. Of those who have reported to date, 45% showed increased total enrollment from fall 2022 to fall 2023, while 55% experienced decreased total enrollment.



The 45% increase/55% decrease trend across ATS schools continues a pattern shown since fall 2006—more schools have shown declines than increases year-over-year. As seen in the chart below, the lone exception since fall 2006 was fall 2020 (the first year of the pandemic), when 54% of ATS schools experienced year-over-year increases in terms of total enrollment.

When looking at year-over-year changes, some stratification can be informative. For schools that have reported through October, 51% of Roman Catholic/Orthodox schools grew in terms of total enrollment from fall 2022 to fall 2023—the only cohort with more schools growing than declining.



Forty-seven percent of Evangelical schools and 40% of Mainline schools grew this year. These trends are subject to change as the remaining 43 schools report, but these numbers indicate continued industry trends related to the annual enrollment picture.

MA enrollment continues to grow, but the rates have slowed recently. Still, there will be more MA students than MDiv students enrolled across ATS schools. The tipping point occurred last fall, and the projections for this year would indicate that there could be 1,000 more

	# Schools reporting	% Increase	% Decrease
All ATS	235	45%	55%
Evangelical	108	47%	53%
Mainline	80	40%	60%
Roman Catholic/Orthodox	47	51%	49%

MA students than MDiv students across ATS schools in fall 2023.

DMin enrollment, if the current year trend holds, will show a decline for the first time in six years. DMin enrollment has been a growth area for many ATS schools, so this shift in

the recent year would be noteworthy.

Enrollment by degree category

The enrollment reported through October also indicates how things are changing within degrees. To date, enrollment within the Master of Divinity (MDiv) is down by 3.5%, within MAs up 1.6%, within the Doctor of Ministry (DMin) down by 2%, within PhD/ThD down 0.8%, and within non-degree enrollment down 2.6%. As with any early results, these numbers are subject to change as remaining schools report and as schools potentially revise their numbers. But already, some interesting trends are emerging.

What about your school?

How have the early trends at your institution mirrored or been different than what is occurring elsewhere? What has contributed to the similarities and differences? Who within your institution can help you understand these trends? Assessing your trends and benchmarking your school against others can open the door to strategic conversations about the sustainability of your mission and purpose. Find spaces within your institution to have these important conversations.

MDiv enrollment continues to fall and has been falling since its peak of just more than 34,700 MDiv students in fall 2006. The 3.5% change from fall 2022 to fall 2023 would represent one of the largest annual declines if it holds. The projected number of MDiv students for fall 2023 will decline to levels that ATS has not reported since 1995.

ATS will update the enrollment data through November, while reviewing admissions, completions, and financial trends, to help schools see where they fit into the broader landscape of theological education.



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