

ATS receives two Lilly Endowment Inc. grants to support member schools

By *MARISSA DECHANT*

ATS recently received two large grants from Lilly Endowment Inc. for projects involving diversity and leadership development. This fall, including the Pathways for Tomorrow Initiative supplemental grant, ATS has received three major grants to help equip its member schools and their leaders to make the changes they need to pursue their multiple futures.

The *Increasing Diversity Capacities among ATS Schools Initiative* is a four-year grant scheduled to begin next month. The grant signals a need from schools, including those that are working on serving diverse student populations through the *Pathways for Tomorrow Initiative*, to better serve increasingly diverse students and communities of faith.

In recognizing that its member schools have different skills, experiences, and needs around diversity, ATS plans to take a multimodal approach to the initiative. This will include mapping, assessment, learning, and resources, while building upon the diversity work with which ATS has been involved (e.g., the ATS Committee on Race and Ethnicity and its Preparing for 2040 project).

Plans for the initiative include engaging ATS member schools in capacity-building experiences, online learning modules, peer group encounters, self-assessment tools, and resource guides. The resources and learnings from the initiative would be made available, as appropriate, across the ATS leadership development programming and through the Association's other initiatives. ATS also anticipates offering grants directly to its member schools

to encourage them to focus on the initiative's learnings and practices.

The initiative will also work to enhance capacities for the Association's staff and committees, including the ATS Board of Directors and the Commission on Accrediting Board of Commissioners, and

look to improve ATS structures and frameworks to better support member schools and improve diverse representation within the Association's own leadership pipeline.

The *Leadership Education/Development for Theological Educators Program* is being funded with a generous grant that started this fall and will take place over the next four and a half years. The grant will focus on building institutional leadership capacities beyond the specific role-based leadership education at ATS schools, while emphasizing the shift from leadership education to leadership development.

Broad goals of the program include providing:

- opportunities for leaders and leadership teams to build the capacities they need to do their work effectively,
- intentional space for peer-to-peer learning, networking, and connection among leaders and faculty at theological schools, and



- access to the wide variety of leadership resources and materials available to support theological schools through the Association and its partner organizations.

The program will include topical discussion groups and webinars to allow for more focused discussion and the introduction of cross-functional conversations. Resources will continue to be shared via ongoing courses on Canvas (the Association's learning management system) and conversations on Engage ATS (the Association's peer networking online community).

There will also be pilots to create collaborative spaces for ATS members with regional cohort projects that would allow schools to define a concrete challenge for the focus of their team's work. These cohort projects would help member schools to build cross-functional teams that can increase nimbleness in responding to changing contexts and circumstances while fostering a culture of collaboration across institutions.



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