ATS Leadership Education Studies Project
Chief Academic Officers

Introduction

How is the role and profession of chief academic officers (CAOs) at The Association of Theological School (ATS) seminaries changing? What leadership education needs must be addressed if deans[1] are to thrive and provide effective leadership in the future? These are the principal questions addressed in this research project.   Our research project team included: Dr. Debbie Gin (ATS staff); Dr. David Wang (quantitative research); Dr. Jeney Park-Hearn (qualitative research); and Dr. Randy MacFarland (advisor). This study is one of six ATS initiated studies of leadership education groups.

An extensive survey to explore topics that include the nature of the dean's role, path to appointment, challenges encountered, skills required to lead effectively, and future professional development programming were considered. The survey was distributed in December of 2019 and completed by nearly 45% of possible respondents. In addition, qualitative research (via Zoom interview) of 19 deans took place in early 2020. (See appendix for representative quality of response set and interview set.)   Most of the interviews occurred during the coronavirus pandemic, which out of necessity required many seminary deans to assume additional responsibilities in their institutions. Time devoted to matters impacting the well-being of faculty, staff and students and remote delivery of theological education brought additional responsibilities.   As one dean noted, "My plate tends to stay pretty full, and so to load all that on there is pretty heavy right now."

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[1] For the purposes of this report chief academic officer (CAO) and dean are used interchangeably.

This study precedes an ATS study of organizational change taking place in theological education. Placing the two studies together should provide opportunity to reflect on additional ways organizational change impacts the CAO.

It is clear that the range and complexity of the role and responsibility of the CAO is impacted in significant ways by school size[2], by ecclesial family (Evangelical, Mainline, Roman Catholic/Orthodox, and Jewish) and whether the school is embedded (part of a university system) or free standing. In some schools, the CAO appointment is for a specified term that may or may not be renewed. One dean spoke of his position as service to the institution, and the deanship viewed "more on the side of teaching." In other schools, the role is viewed as a more distinct vocation with an open duration of service.

The survey response set correlated closely with the ATS/COA database with respect to school location (Canadian or United States), racial identification of the dean and school size. A little over 7% more female deans responded than would be reflective of the database. In addition, 9% more deans of denominationally related schools responded (63%) than reflected the database (54% of deans are from denominationally related schools).

As noted by Dr. Jeney Park-Hearn (qualitative researcher and interviewer), "This study did not account for the social location particularities of the respondents (gender, race, ability, age, theological affiliation). More pointed insights can be garnered from future studies that examine more closely and deliberately how social identifiers necessarily shape the experience of being dean but also the interpretation of interview questions and responses given."

The expanding role of administration in school governance continues to impact the responsibilities of the dean in many schools. In recent years an ATS-sponsored initiative on shared

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[2] For the purpose of this study, small [1-75 headcount], mid-sized [76-150 headcount], large [151-300 headcount] and largest [301+ headcount].

governance encouraged schools to delineate the role and responsibility of each governing body (board, administration and faculty) in both authority and governance. The increased role of administration in introducing, championing and initiating change often requires the dean to be a "change agent" and one who implements a change process in a culture that can at times be change resistant and require carefully delineated processes and consensus building. A dean commenting on skills and attributes that should be looked for in hiring of future deans put it this way, "Willingness to change, to be at the forefront of change, to be willing to engage change, and actually look for opportunities to change and grow."

A study of the changing role and responsibility of the dean recognizes that external forces beyond the direct control of the dean impact both the nature of the work and priorities of CAOs. External forces (whether threats or opportunities) impact the creation and execution of a sustainable business plan which when considered together with solving enrollment challenges would be considered a major source of work-related stress.

Long lasting implications of the global coronavirus pandemic are yet to be fully understood. Institutional resilience will be tested in new and unanticipated ways.

The growth of information technology is felt system wide in theological education. Changes in the nature of support services required by individual faculty and the creation of departments in service of online and/or hybrid course production add new direct reports (i.e. Director of Educational Technology). Many deans manage multiple delivery systems which adds complexity to course scheduling and faculty deployment.

Several deans commented on frequency of interaction with their Chief Financial Officer (CFO) as well as other administrators in light of economic pressures. One dean commented that, "Cash flow is

discussed in our leadership meeting every week. Everybody's more aware of budget than I think people had to be previously."

Our research should encourage reflection and conversation to support creative and innovative programming in leadership education for those serving in the pivotal role of CAO. So, what did the research reveal?

Significance of the Role and Range of Responsibilities

The role of CAO continues to be viewed as important. In addition to caring for the faculty and administrative matters in the education of students, the dean's office interacts and connects with a wide range of offices on a regular basis: "The dean is integral to this whole thing…There's an intermeshing with work being done by communications, the advancement office, and in various ways, facilities and operations, and ground keeping. All those things, so it's the position that really glues the institution together." Our interviewer noted that "The general consensus was that the dean is necessary in theological education and that because of *the all-encompassing scope of the dean's work* there would not be a time when the position would be eliminated. Not only does the CAO interface with many seminary constituents, oftentimes, the CAO is positioned in the 'middle' in a mediating capacity between administrators and faculty, or faculty and students." One dean used the image of a spider in the middle of a web to describe the multitude of groups they interact with, "There's nothing I do that doesn't touch one or more departments or other groups of staff at the school."

The range of responsibilities of the CAO continue to grow. Comments related to questions about the dean's role and how the role has changed led our interviewer to summarize: "one resounding theme descriptive of the role of the dean is that there are a host of responsibilities and areas of oversight that come with this role. CAOs have their hands in faculty support, curriculum development, program design and implementation, remote learning, policy writing, seminary finances, student life,

community presence, vision-casting, pastoral care, accreditation, assessment, faculty recruitment, budget-setting, conflict management, community engagement, student support, global connection building, and crisis management."

The survey revealed that primary responsibilities of deans include faculty hiring, deployment and evaluation. Additional responsibilities often include strategic planning/program development, managing accreditation and assessment, and academic policy creation and revision. Furthermore, 10% report responsibilities that include student support and 8% managing partnerships that include contacts within a university (in the case of an embedded school) or church/denominational leaders.   My own experience would add increased engagement with human resource personnel surrounding legal issues and compliance training.

The range of departments and number of direct reports supervised by the dean varies by institution but the survey clearly reminds us of the complexity and scope of responsibilities carried by deans. In our study up to 19 different department leaders were cited by deans as direct reports.

 Personnel serving in the academic or educational services department (including, but not limited to: faculty, registrar, library director, director of educational technology and director of assessment) are only somewhat difficult to recruit. However, registrars and directors of educational technology are reported to be somewhat more difficult to retain. I believe schools will need to review the market value of key staff positions and adjust compensation packages accordingly.

An increasing amount of time and responsibility for many deans is devoted to measuring institutional effectiveness through the assessment of learning outcomes. Assessing capacity to deliver theological education transitioned to documentation of educational effectiveness. Dr. Daniel Aleshire, former executive director of ATS, noted in 2008 that "The older criteria for assessing higher education focused on the quality of educational resources and processes….The newer criteria focus on the quality

of student learning….The emerging paradigm focuses on quality of learning and accountability of teachers."[3]

Deans noted the time demand of increased reporting. My own observation is that this is especially true in schools without offices of institutional effectiveness or personnel dedicated to assessment of student learning. One dean commenting on surprises in the role said, "What was a surprise for me when I took on this role was the amount of reporting that has to be done." One dean reflected on the positive benefit of assessment and noted, "Assessment has just gone crazy in the last 10 years, both in our university, and in the ATS. We're doing that constantly with all the various different faculty committees." In many schools the dean finds him/herself serving as accreditation liaison officer (ALO).

Several deans spoke of responsibilities involving curricular change and revision. Even in Roman Catholic schools that may have a more prescribed curriculum, new programs are developed to serve new constituencies (i.e. programs for laity and Spanish speakers). One dean observed that, "The number of degree programs and the complexity of our degree programs have changed." When I was a theological student in the early 70's there were limited degree options compared to the plethora of degrees and concentrations when I returned to the same school in the late 90's.

Apportionment of time and priority given to various responsibilities given the size and nature (related or free standing) of the school would be an interesting follow up question.   The various responsibilities highlighted in this section, as the interviews and survey confirmed, is not exhaustive but is illustrative of the breadth of duties.

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[3] Daniel O. Aleshire, *Earthen Vessels* Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans, 2008), p.49-50.

Leading and Responding to change

Interviews with deans explored the question of institutional change and responses to the rate of change. Dialogue around institutional change led our interviewer to conclude that "Change is a constant and seminaries are finding their way in it." She commented that while there were "diverse responses to the question about change, it was noteworthy to observe change as by-product of the need to survive distinct from more 'organic' changes resulting from the particularities of a seminary, for instance, being responsive to surrounding socioreligious shifts and to representative denominations or being motivated by a growth model for the institution…As one CAO put it, 'I think survival is a powerful motivator to change.'"

It would be wrong to reduce all change to institutional survival. Our interviewer rightfully observed that "Motivating concerns about the sustainability of institutions did not necessarily have to obscure other important factors that have led to significant changes. These can be held in tandem as initiators of change." An example would be concern for growth and fulfillment of mission. One dean in describing expanding the school's market said, "It wasn't just…enrollment number, but just a sense that we could serve the church more than just one population."

It is encouraging to note from the interviews that response to change, while sometimes slow and "one step forward and one step back," is becoming the new accepted norm by deans and faculty. In some cases, as noted by our interviewer, "Seminaries' responses to change have also been dynamic and nimble." It was particularly encouraging to have one dean who had led their school through a merger they described as, "Terrifically traumatic. Terrifically painful, very disruptive" to use the word "resilient" to describe the response to change by members of their community.

Survey results noted a high level of agreement [mean 3.37 with (3) as agree and (4) as strongly agree] with the statement, "I have led my institution through significant change." Leading institutional

change in the words of our interviewer, "…has required deans to call upon their myriad skill sets and ways of being to form their personal manner of engaging the many transitions and adjustments they witness amongst the faculty and seminary personnel." As one dean noted, it often requires discussing and managing loss and sadness.

It is interesting to note that leading the institution in significant change does not lead deans to conclude that their schools have found sustainable business models. In response to the survey question, "I have helped my institution find its way to a sustainable business model" responses fell between agree and disagree [mean 2.64 with (2) disagree and (3) agree]. One survey question required Chief Financial Officers (CFOS) and Chief Development Officers (CDOs), as well as CAOs, to select up to three causes of work-related stress from a list of nine. CFOs selected "finding a sustainable business model"" more often that deans (59% to 32%). However, deans selected "solving enrollment challenges" (41%) and "dealing with change and innovation" (29%) more often than either CFOS (30% and 13%) or CDOs (17% and 11%).

One dean noted that weathering change is enhanced "when we have a higher sense of purpose, when we have a higher sense of calling or a deeper sense of vocation, that helps us weather."

Preparation and Path to the Role

The overwhelming majority of CAOs had no prior experience (mean 1.11 years) working as a CAO. This stands in sharp contrast to CFOs (mean of 4.54 years) and Chief Development Officers (CDO) (mean of 5.13 years) surveyed. In my experience, it takes a full academic year to begin to understand the scope and range of responsibilities of the office. I believe that more attention to succession planning and documentation of seasonal responsibilities of the office is essential. In addition, lack of prior experience in the role underscores the importance of resources for new deans.

The path to the vocation of CAO usually includes work and/or background in education (82%) and/or in congregational ministry (65%).   However, not surprisingly, immediately prior to assuming the role more than three-quarters report coming from the field of education (59% graduate theological education). It is interesting to note that 87% of survey respondents either were asked to apply for the position or directly invited to take the position. 91% of women and 76% of men report someone(s) advocating for them to assume the role of dean.

Our interviewer noted that emerging from a line of inquiry about how they came to their current position was "*the role of the community* and unforced shifts that came about because of various life circumstances.   Recognizing administrative gifts and prior professional experience in administration, presidents and colleagues identified the interviewees as fitting for the job of CAO. Interviewees identified teaching to be their 'first passion' and thus a more circuitous path and circumstantial series of events led them to their current CAO roles." It should be noted that only three of nineteen interviewed came to their current position from external schools.

A PhD/Th.D. is the credential held by 88% of respondents. In addition, 55% had an MDiv degree in addition to other degrees. Those with an MDiv would agree that having an understanding of theological education enhanced their ability to lead in their current role.

Persistence in the Role

Years of service in the role ranged from 0-21 years with a mean of 5.57 years. While slightly more than half don't see themselves retiring from the position and 72% don't see themselves leaving in the next twelve months, 60% felt they could transition from the position. A higher percentage of female deans have thought about leaving the position. Years of service in the role is a more likely predictor of retirement from the position.

It is interesting to note that a higher percentage of deans from evangelical schools could envision themselves retiring from the position. Conversely, very few from Roman Catholic/Orthodox schools envisioned retiring from the position. Some of these findings can certainly be attributed to the way the position is envisioned by a particular school. Is it the expectation that different faculty would serve for a specified period of time and then return to a faculty position? Or, is the position itself viewed as a vocational calling of indefinite duration?

Workload and Stressors

The range of hours devoted to the deanship varied greatly among those surveyed (15-80 hours per week) with a mean of 48.24 hours. While most deans don't work outside of the school (85%), the overwhelming number (97%) hold multiple positions at their school. The dual appointment almost universally reported was a faculty appointment in addition to the administrative appointment. Some schools use the title of Vice-President or Academic Dean or Dean instead of Chief Academic Officer.

The percentage of time given to teaching had some correlation to the size of the institution (deans of smaller schools teaching more). However, only 5% of respondents reported teaching more than 50% of the time and 24% of respondents reported teaching 10% or less.

What are some major stressors experienced by CAOs? Respondents to the survey were able to select from a list of nine up to three causes of work-related stress. Selected as responses more than 30% of the time included:

- Balancing demanding work hours with other responsibilities (54%)
- Dealing with difficult employees and colleagues (51%)
- Solving enrollment challenges (41%)
- Finding a sustainable business model (32%)

Interviews supported survey findings. Our interviewer probed the question of work-related stress by asking, "What dean worries keep you up at night?" She noted "thematic groupings…around finances, workload and personnel issues."

Enrollment challenges and the lack of a sustainable business plan contribute to financial pressures. One dean after initially stating he slept well at night later expressed "deep-seated worry" and with respect to finances, "Survival and pain that you recognize some people are undergoing. Those are things that they're at the back of your mind. Sometimes they're right in front of your mind." Particularly for schools whose major source of revenue is tuition, solving enrollment challenges is a significant factor in developing a sustainable business model. Embedded seminaries can be impacted by university prioritization of limited resources and seminaries with strong endowments by market volatility and limited return on investments, particularly in this time of pandemic.

Work-load contributes to work-related stress. One dean noted, "How do I get all the work done? It's more the workload kind of things that keep me awake at night." One dean in response to workload expressed, "I do think it'd be a common refrain for the number of people who work in an academic dean's office, and that is it's relentless."

Personnel issues also lead to sleepless nights for many deans. Interviewees referenced faculty not getting along with one another, relationship issues with their boss and faculty not relating well to students or faculty colleagues.

Our quantitative researcher ran regression models and found that the strongest and most statistically significant predictor of deans looking for other jobs was dissatisfaction with the CEO. Other significant predictors include: dissatisfaction with work; stress related to finding a sustainable business model; poor self-care skills; lack of ability to lead institutional change or innovate; and not maintaining spiritual disciplines (e.g., Sabbath).

Institutional Support

Interviewees were questioned about their relationship with those in other roles and helpful partners in their work. Narratives of both positive working relationships and relationships that could be characterized (as noted by our interviewer) by words like "tension, distrust, and conflict" were recorded.

It would be interesting to study the degree to which predecessor support or lack thereof impacts deans transitioning into the position. In some cases, the predecessor remains as a member of the faculty. In other cases, someone from the outside assumes the role. Is there overlap time that is paid for by the institution? Are deans asked to prepare a calendar of seasonal responsibilities before they exit? What are the lingering tasks and personnel issues? Just over half of respondents felt that predecessors in their role had left the institution well ordered. Response to the question varied by size of institution. Deans of the largest and smallest schools recorded less satisfaction with the effectiveness of their predecessor than those of large or mid-size schools.

Respondents mentioned a wide range of individuals as allies in their work, including fellow administrators, faculty, and staff (i.e. librarians, registrars, and chaplains). A beautiful picture of roles working in concert with the dean is described by our interviewer, "in response to the question about his relationship with other roles, one dean described the term 'swing' in a reference to the 'philosopher of rowing,' George Yeoman Peacock who said that in the swing, all eight rowers are working in perfect coordination, the boat takes on a life of its own. It's a transcendent, ecstatic sort of experience…when I look around at the team that we have, the team that the president rector has assembled…we are in the swing."

The research revealed no significant variables across ecclesial family or size of institution related to CAOs feeling supported by their boards. Only 14% reported that the board hindered their work in

some way. For those in embedded institutions, being embedded was a hindrance noted by 38% of respondents.

It is important to note only 61% of CAOs surveyed receive an annual written performance review. The person most often charged with assessment of their work is the President (60%) and formal or informal conversation for evaluative purposes seemed to be a preferred means of performance evaluation. Clearly, the research indicated no standard way in which a dean's work is assessed.

Job Satisfaction

Survey respondents were queried regarding their level of satisfaction in the role. The survey question, "All things considered, to what degree are you satisfied with your current job?" permitted five responses ranging from "very dissatisfied" to "very satisfied". 52% said they were "satisfied" and 31% responded "very satisfied". The mean response of (4.02-satisfied) was almost identical to the mean response of CFOs (4.04-satisfied) and CDOs (4.08-satisfied) to the same question.

One survey question asked deans to record the percent time they were happy, neutral or unhappy with their job. It is interesting to note the range of percentages: "happy" (60%), "neutral" (23%), "unhappy" (17%). What are some of the factors that contribute to job satisfaction or lead to the selection of "happy"?

Respondents to the survey were asked to describe their level of satisfaction with nine work features. Work features with a mean of satisfied were: personal relationships with your coworkers [mean: 3.63 with (4) being very satisfied and (3) satisfied)], the work you do (mean: 3.62), and relationship with faculty (mean: 3.58). Responses to questions related to job satisfaction were similar across schools of different size and ecclesial family. However, the longer someone had served in the role was a predictor of satisfaction with faculty relationships.

Work features that ranked the highest in importance clustered around relationships and the significance of the dean's work to their institution. Good working relationships with faculty [mean: 3.87 with (4) being very important and (3) important], co-workers (mean: 3.82) and the Chief Executive Officer (mean: 3.72). The importance of the work to job satisfaction was captured by one dean who said, "One of my favorite moments is when you follow someone from being new in the institution, all the way through graduation. You've had a hand in their development along the way."

Leadership Styles and Competencies

CAOs exercise a wide variety of leadership styles in carrying out their responsibilities. It is not surprising, given the nature of the role and work with faculty, that 63% selected a collaborative leadership style when asked to choose up to three from a list of ten to describe their particular style. In addition, the next most frequently selected styles were organizational thinker (42%) and servant leader (37%). Survey responses suggest that an ability to think organizationally, build teams, collaborate and empower others is important. One dean commented, "I think you need to have the people skills of how to foster community and collaborative workspaces and a sense of honoring others and raising them up, empowering them…" It is interesting to note that choices to describe leadership style that were less frequently chosen included: imaginative (16%), visionary (14%) and change agent (14%).

Further research is needed to determine if a particular leadership style or styles contribute to effectiveness and resilience. I suspect that the ability to move between styles, including styles that work well with faculty (collaborative) and are needed institutionally (change agent) will be important. One dean captured expectations future deans may increasingly experience in stating, "I think there's an actual expectation to actually lead. There's an actual expectation to innovate. There's an expectation to produce measurable metric-based results."

Are there competencies that are necessary in order to lead effectively and thrive in this season of unprecedented change in theological education? What competencies should be prioritized in looking for deans in the future?   Interviewees' comments, following my own reading could be summarized around categories of personal qualities and life skills, interpersonal skills, and technical skills.

First, the importance of personal qualities and life skills (including time management, self-care and spiritual formation). Personal qualities that interviewees shared as important in the role include:

- A collaborative spirit
- Patient
- Spiritually discerning
- A positive attitude
- Flexibility, adaptability, quick to adjust to change
- A get it done spirit
- Innovative
- Not risk adverse
- Compassionately caring
- Able to multi-task
- Love for people
- An entrepreneurial dimension
- Open to criticism
- Ability to trust others

Our interviewer noted that one respondent, "demonstrated his 'collaborative spirit' in his ability to get the ball running, keep managing the process, and yet be willing to let it develop with input so it's owned by the faculty and the administration. He also stated that he can 'figure out what's goin' on with people emotionally.'" I often used the analogy, in my own work as dean, of putting the gas on the pedal enough to keep things moving but not so much that things implode!

Balancing the many demands of the job requires self-discipline and time management. You must have the ability to "reprioritize one's day several times each day." One dean said, "I think being organized and managing your time well has enabled me to function well in the office and to also deal with any change that's come up." Ability to set boundaries, identify conversation partners (confidants)

and develop a spirit of detachment are important personal skills for surviving and thriving in the role. A dean cited Ignatius and said that to thrive in the role, one needed "a spirit of detachment…from wealth, and from power, and from prestige, and all those things that usually drive our ego." And, not to be neglected, as one dean phrased it, "…gotta have a sense of humor about ourselves as well as others."

Deans spoke of the importance of self-care: "…I have to take care of myself spiritually, emotionally, and physically." In order to thrive in the job, you need "A healthy balance of work, life, fun, having interests outside of the job, having friendships, colleagues outside of the job." One dean connected their time alone with God as essential to relating well with colleagues, "I mean getting up in the morning, taking quiet time, being right with God, giving the day over to God so that I could be in a right mental, emotional, and spiritual place to hear my colleagues without taking their frustration personally. I have found that to be an essential skill in this job."

Second, interpersonal skills are invaluable and were often referenced. One dean put it quite simply, "You have to have good relational skills, good people skills…" An ability to "listen to stakeholders" is essential.

Interpersonal skills to manage and mediate conflict are important. As one dean put it, "Certainly people skills – the ability to negotiate and mediate conflict is huge." One interviewee commented, "Being a leader and being an active dean is to hold a set of conflicts that are always changing. Different faculty members who want different things, the board, the president, the students, different groups in between all that. There's always conflicting desires, values, wants, needs, etc." Deans who commented on what kept them up at night noted that having unfinished tasks should be on the list, but as one said it so well for themselves (and others), "For me, it's usually the relationships."

The emotional intelligence to manage one's own emotions and the emotions of others can support good interpersonal relationships which as noted, is important in job satisfaction. One dean

summarized, "I think the whole range of social intelligence, emotional intelligence, social awareness, self-awareness, other awareness, contextual awareness, all that's critically important. A dean said, "It's the ability not to respond to the emotional urgency of something in a reactive way." This comment suggests the importance of bringing, as Thomas Friedman has stated, "a non-anxious presence" into situations and interactions that can be emotionally charged.

As schools become more diverse, cultural intelligence becomes increasingly important. An astute dean noted, "Cultural intelligence pretty much has to go without saying." One dean mentioned being in a position to advocate for diversity: "Diversity is not, for me, it's not about political correctness. It's about theological correctness. I mean we have to celebrate the gifts of difference amongst us." Another dean commented: "We've always had good gender diversity for about 40 years, but we've had more diversity around theological diversity, racial/ethnic diversity, and educational background diversity. We're trying to be more attentive to who's coming to learn with us, and how do we best serve them in classrooms and community."

Deans must be able to build trust over time through good communication, fairness in administering policy and treatment of people. Building a reserve of trust will help when difficult decisions and changes are required. Our interviewer commented on one respondent making "…explicit the trust that is possible when a dean has the capacity to be a dean through collaboration and through relating through their people skills. He named 'good trust' amongst different internal constituents and continued that if he were hiring an academic dean, he would choose 'someone who had the greatest amount of trust from faculty and students.' This dean also associated with trust 'hanging out,' the sense that we're journeying together to figure things out, and being 'socially engaging, warm, trustworthy, listening.'"

Addressing organizational health requires good communication skills, attention to the impact of decisions on people and interpersonal skills for navigating personnel issues. Referencing organizational health, one dean said, "It's an unleveraged one [strategic advantage] because we don't realize how important it is to have healthy relationships in an organization."

Third, technical skills or competencies are necessary and should be looked for when hiring a dean. Skills mentioned in my review of interviewee responses included:

- Ability to manage paperwork and basic administrative skills
- Organizational skills
- Business management skills which include reading and managing a budget and financial reports
- Supervisory skills
- Writing skills
- Basic research skills
- Skill in utilizing technology
- Group process skills

CAOs are heavily involved in strategic conversations in order to steward institutional resources needed to fulfill mission. Reflecting on competencies needed in the role one dean replied, "I think the ability to see both the big picture and the details and how the details serve the big picture right, to be able to think critically about the decisions ahead and make strategic decisions based on strategic priorities."

Deans need both knowledge and experience with assessment of student learning and familiarity with ATS standards. In addition, deans will benefit from skills in curricular planning, andragogy and experiences with different educational models. Future deans must, as stated by one dean, be "willing to rethink educational models."

Professional Development

CAOs view ATS programming as an important source of professional development (83%). Time and funding are most frequently cited as barriers to attendance at sponsored events.

Likelihood of participation in ATS events might increase if presentations included opportunities to be in cohorts comprised of persons from similar schools (41% favored) and presenters from schools of the same ecclesial family (36% favored). A higher percentage of those from the large and the largest schools favored presenters from similar sized schools. Those with longer years of service in the role had greater interest in programming that included those serving in other institutional roles (CFOs, etc.) but 81% overall do not favor programming with those in different administrative roles.

Deans from Jewish and Roman Catholic/Orthodox schools requested topics that applied most directly to their work. This is an important reminder of the need for workshops that apply directly to the varied ecclesial families represented by seminary deans. Featured experts from outside theological education would be preferred more by those from evangelical and mainline ecclesial family schools. Are there transferable competencies that might be addressed by deans outside of theological education? One dean suggested including deans from other professions (i.e. law or nursing) as presenters.

A third of those surveyed recommend keeping leadership development programming under 3 days. Connecting with colleagues (the strongest desire expressed by deans from mid-size schools) is important. One dean requested, "Ample time, both informally and formally, with an agenda to talk to other positional equals about their work." There is no substitute for "being with peers, those who have gone through it, who are going through it, and praying together." Someone suggested, "Having a mentor, someone who has been in the dean role…I would love to be accountable to a person who had some wisdom and experience, rather than just blurt out all kinds of things to a group of people."

Past ATS sponsored events for deans that recorded the highest levels of attendance beyond the Chief Academic Officers Society (CAOS) annual meeting (67% of respondents) included the School for New Deans (36% attended), Educational Models and Practices (30% attended) and Women in Leadership (25% attended).

Is there subject matter that would meet a need or fill a gap in preparation for the role? Are there professional development topics that should be considered in curricular revision for this affinity group (CAOs)?

Subject matter to be considered includes: strategic planning, change management, grant writing, and conflict management and mediation. Those in evangelical and mainline schools expressed an interest in programming that included emphasis on how to articulate vision and mission. These two ecclesial family deans also expressed the strongest interest in strategic planning. Those in the large or the largest schools were more likely to express interest in grant writing. Noteworthy is that an increased number of years on the job was a significant predictor of greater interest in programming that focused on relational skills including: generous listening, networking/building social capital, and navigating organizational politics. Additional research to determine correlation of this skill set to resilience might be informative.

Other topics to consider include: considerations in developing a sustainable business model and budgeting/financial management. A specific suggestion was, "A workshop on dealing with difficult personalities (could be an administrator, faculty member or student)." Serving on an ATS accreditation team was mentioned as formative by one dean: "I would really give credit to ATS for opening my eyes to a wider world of theological education."

Survey findings show that amongst the strong and statistically significant predictors of deans looking for other jobs were: poor self-care skills, burnout, not prioritizing Sabbath or engaging in other spiritual disciplines. Addressing these topics would represent preventative care.

The New Dean's Conference, Wabash and the Forum for Theological Exploration all provided important opportunities for professional development. One dean remarked that the, "Forum for Theological Exploration (FTE) has been very helpful in us thinking about diversity, equity and inclusion." ATS continues to be looked to for resources for professional development, "I think understanding accreditation, and also their wider resources have been very helpful too." Books cited as helpful included: C(H)AOS Theory, Kathleen D. Billman and Bruce C. Birch (editors), Redeeming Administration: 12 Spiritual Habits for Catholic Leaders in Parishes, Schools, Religious Communities, and Other Institutions, Ann M. Garrido, and The Advantage by Patrick Lencioni.

Each of the four strategic priorities of ATS have direct bearing on the role and responsibilities of the CAO.

1) **Equip leaders for effective change**.

   Deans strategize and engage in conversations around institutional change and the research indicates that skills in change management is both a need and area of interest.

2) **Explore innovative business/organizational models**.

   Deans increasingly find stress at work related to enrollment challenges that demand finding a sustainable business model.

3) **Enhance schools adaptive work**

   Creativity in curricular programming including program development and expansion is a key area of responsibility for the CAO.

4) **Engaging the membership in its broad diversity**.

Deans will benefit from the new data visualization tool found on ATS' website that includes easier access to data through an interactive tool.   Observing trends and changes by denominational family, country and ecclesial family of schools including the opportunity to select from a wide range of institutional data variables should aid in strategic planning and decision making. In particular, this will help schools interested in comparing metrics with schools of similar size or ecclesial family. In addition, on-line resources and funding opportunities can be accessed and reviewed.

Considerations/Recommendations

1) Very few deans come to the position with prior experience in the role. Since the need for continuing education is most acutely felt when transitioning to an unfamiliar role and new responsibilities, the School for New Deans is an important forum for both education and connecting with others new to the role.   In addition, one person mentioned that consideration should be given to a school for deans who have served 3-5 years in the role.

2) Topics to consider for those new to the position of CAO include:

- **Debriefing expectations versus realities of the role**. When our interviewer posed questions around expectations and surprises, there were a wide range of responses that made it difficult to identify common themes. My concern would be to normalize some of these thoughts and feelings for new deans complemented by specific teaching on the commonalities associated with the role.   Stephen Graham notes an important commonality in a summary statement, "The academic deanship exists largely to help others be successful in their vocations. The dean is a leader but is necessarily a servant to others' agendas. As such, the dean's time is not his or her own, but is given to the mission of the institution, the vision of the president, the needs of the faculty to help

them fulfill their individual and shared vocations, and the needs of students whose learning is (or should be) the primary goal of the theological school."[4]

- **Discussing the challenges, complexity and skills required in leading adaptive versus technical change**. A lack of ability to lead institutional change and to innovate was a statistically significant predictor of job dissatisfaction.

- **Reviewing intentional practices that contribute to a healthy CEO/CAO relationship** (i.e. building trust, communicating with one another, managing up. avoiding triangulation and maintaining appropriate boundaries within roles). This emphasis is particularly important since dissatisfaction with the CEO is the strongest and statistically most significant predictor for deans actively looking for another position.

- **Prioritizing self-care practices and disciplines of spiritual formation**. Poor self-care skills were a significant predictor of job dissatisfaction and a strong predictor of looking for another job. One dean perceptively noted the connection between spiritual disciplines and communication: "To be in a position of listening first thing in the morning in prayer is crucial, and then I'm in a position of listening all day long. People feel listened to…"

- **Cultivating conversation partners with peers from similar sized schools within the same ecclesial family.** A dean stressed, "Opportunities to engage with other people in similar institutions about the work we're doing."

3) Planning curriculum for on-going professional development would benefit from workshops dedicated specifically for those from schools of a particular size, those from a specific ecclesial family of schools, as well as, separate workshops for those from both free-standing and embedded schools.

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[4] Stephen R. Graham, "The Vocation of the Academic Dean," in *C(H)AOS Theory,* eds. Billman and Birch (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 2011), p. 65-66.

4) The research indicates that job satisfaction is related to healthy relationships with faculty, co-workers and the President (CEO). Deans with greater longevity in the position expressed a greater interest in further development of relational skills. Attention to growth in both emotional and cultural intelligence supports growth in "people skills". Growth in self-awareness will contribute to setting appropriate boundaries in a position with increasing demands and expectations. One dean said it so well in their comment, "To be academic dean is a graced moment in anyone's life. Just to trust that in the words of the Book of Esther, 'You have been chosen for such a time as this.' If people can trust in that and not try to be somebody else, but just give the gifts they've been given there's a tremendous freedom in that."

5) Strategies and practices that contribute to organizational health become increasingly important in times of crisis. In addition, workshops centered on strategic planning, finances, conflict management and leading change should be well received.

6) Discussing best practices and strategies for "right sizing" an institution in light of enrollment and economic volatility is a central matter of concern for all seminary administrators. In particular, the CAO needs tools to assess the impact changes in institutional business plans have on vocational preparedness.

Daniel Aleshire in his "Afterword" chapter in C(H)AOS Theory notes that, "Good academic leadership relies on a scholarship of the deanship."[5] I am particularly grateful for the support and invaluable contributions of my colleagues to that end on this project team.

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[5] Daniel O. Aleshire, "The Scholarship of Academic Leadership: A Postscript on the Work of Chief Academic Officers", *C(H)AOS Theory,* eds. Billman and Birch (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Press, 2011), p. 395.

The hope of each of us (Dr.'s Debbie Gin, David Wang, Jeney Park-Hearn and Randy MacFarland) is that this study will support professional development that is timely and relevant and will contribute to the effectiveness and resilience of those who serve in the important role of Chief Academic Officer.

Respectfully submitted,

Dr. Randy MacFarland

June 2020

Appendix A

Representative Quality of Samples

Total Sample Size: 136 (52% response rate)

Survey Response Set	ATS/COA Database
12.5% Canada	14% Canada
44.9% EV 36.8% ML 17.6% RC/O 0.7% Jewish	43% EV 34% ML 22% RC/O 1% Jewish
39.0% Related	41% Related
20.6% Small (1-75 HC) 27.2% Mid-sized (76-150 HC) 30.9% Large (151-300 HC) 21.3% Largest (300+ HC)	23% Small 29% Mid-sized 27% Large 21% Largest
63.2% Denominational 18.4% Independent 17.6% Roman Catholic / Orthodox 0.7% Jewish	54% Denominational 23% Independent 22% Roman Catholic / Orthodox 1% Jewish
5.1% Doctoral Universities: Highest Research Activity 11.8% Doctoral Universities: Higher Research Activity 25.0% Doctoral Universities: Professional-Larger 26.5% Doctoral Universities: Professional-Smaller 17.6% Master's Colleges & Universities: Larger Programs 14.0% Master's Colleges & Universities: Smaller Programs	5% Doctoral Universities: Highest Research Activity 15% Doctoral Universities: Higher Research Activity 20% Doctoral Universities: Professional-Larger 25% Doctoral Universities: Professional-Smaller 17% Master's Colleges & Universities: Larger Programs 18% Master's Colleges & Universities: Smaller Programs
32.4% Female 67.6% Male	25% Female 75% Male
8.1% Asian or Pacific Islander 6.7% Black, African American 0% Native American, First Nation 5.2% Hispanic, Latino(a) 83.0% White, Caucasian 0.7% Other	9% Asian or Pacific Islander 7% Black, African American 0% Native American, First Nation 5% Hispanic, Latino(a) 79% White, Caucasian

Interview Response Set	ATS/COA Database
10.5% Canada	14% Canada
42.1% EV 36.8% ML 21.1% RC/O	43% EV 34% ML 22% RC/O
31.6% Related	41% Related
15.8% Small (1-75 HC) 36.8% Mid-sized (76-150 HC) 21.1% Large (151-300 HC) 26.3% Largest (300+ HC)	22% Small 29% Mid-sized 27% Large 21% Largest
68.4% Denominational (Den) 10.5% Independent (Ind) 21.1 Roman Catholic / Orthodox (RC/O)	54% Denominational 23% Independent 22% Roman Catholic / Orthodox
10.5% Doctoral Universities: Highest Research Activity 0% Doctoral Universities: Higher Research Activity 26.3% Doctoral Universities: Professional-Larger 42.1% Doctoral Universities: Professional-Smaller 15.8% Master's Colleges & Universities: LargerPrograms 5.3% Master's Colleges & Universities: Smaller Programs	5% Doctoral Universities: Highest Research Activity 15% Doctoral Universities: Higher Research Activity 20% Doctoral Universities: Professional-Larger 25% Doctoral Universities: Professional-Smaller 17% Master's Colleges & Universities: Larger Programs 18% Master's Colleges & Universities: Smaller Programs
31.6% Female 68.4% Male	38% Female 62% Male
15.8% Asian or Pacific Islander 5.3% Black, African American 0% Native American, First Nation 5.3% Hispanic, Latino(a) 5.3% Multiracial 68.4% White, Caucasian	8% Asian or Pacific Islander 5% Black, African American 0% Native American, First Nation 2% Hispanic, Latino(a) 83% White, Caucasian

Interview Protocol

Topic (Research Question)	Interview Questions
Introductory Questions	1. What is your role at your institution and how long have you been in this role? 2. What is a favorite story or fulfilling moment in your role? 3. What does the role of the dean look like in your institution? And to your knowledge, how has it changed?
Satisfaction/Longevity	4. What makes the role of dean necessary in theological education? Can you foresee a time when the position might be eliminated? If so, why, and who would pick up the responsibilities? 5. What were some unrealized expectations after you took the position? What surprised you? How have you adjusted to the gap between unrealized expectations and the surprises?
Leadership Relationships	6. How would you describe your relationship with other roles in your institution? Name partners who have been instrumental to your effectiveness as dean. *(if necessary, provide examples- other people in the institution, technologies, other institutions)*
Effectiveness	7. Describe what change has looked like in your institution? *(If the interviewee doesn't mention anything about adjuncts and NTT faculty ask, "Is your school relying more on non-tenure track faculty and adjunct faculty and if so what are the advantages and disadvantages of this change?)* 8. How have you and others responded to the rate of change? 9. Provide an example of how you have 'led significant change' at your institution? *(What personal strength and/or skillset facilitated your leadership through significant change?)* 10. What competencies will schools need to seek in hiring future deans?
Leadership Resources	11. What dean worries keep you up at night? 12. What skills and attributes are necessary for deans to thrive? 13. Describe an ideal professional development opportunity for a dean.