

# ATS welcomes new staff member to support diversity efforts

By *MARISSA DECHANT*

The Association of Theological Schools (ATS) is pleased to announce Alyson Barra as program assistant for diversities. Her hire comes at a time when ATS is beginning work on its new Increasing Diversity Capacities among ATS Schools Initiative, which focuses on helping schools to better serve increasingly diverse students and communities of faith.



In her new role, **Barra** will help to coordinate the planning, presentation, and post-production of resources and programs related to the diversity, the Committee on Race and Ethnicity (CORE), Women in Leadership (WIL), and global engagement missions of the organization.

She will work with ATS staff members Frank Yamada, executive director; Lester Edwin J. Ruiz, director of accreditation and global engagement; and Elsie Miranda, director of accreditation and diversity. Miranda added “director of diversity” to her portfolio in 2022, to continue the Association’s diversity efforts as Mary H. Young, director of CORE and WIL programs, retires next month.

Prior to ATS, Barra was a patient access lead at the Birmingham Free Clinic in Pittsburgh, where she worked with a diverse team of providers to care for the uninsured of Western Pennsylvania. She has also worked as an ESL

tutor through Compass Americorps: Literacy Pittsburgh and brings many intercultural capacities to her work. She holds a bachelor of arts degree from Albion College, completing coursework in international studies, classical piano, and Spanish.

“We are excited about the gifts and skills that Alyson brings to the diversity work of ATS. She is a skilled intercultural communicator, which will serve the Association’s diverse membership well,” said Yamada.

## ***The Association’s commitment to diversity***

For more than 20 years, ATS has been involved in the different ways that its member schools have sought to improve in diversity, which is one of the Association’s four core values. Diversity work is woven throughout the 2020 *Standards of Accreditation*, recognizing the varying contexts of ATS member schools and the constituencies they serve.

Diversity work has become more important based on what schools are doing to better serve their student populations. The *Increasing Diversity Capacities among ATS*

Schools Initiative signals a need from schools, including those working on serving diverse student populations through the [Pathways for Tomorrow Initiative](#), to better serve increasingly diverse communities.

More than two-thirds of the *Pathways* grants involve schools seeking to serve more diverse student populations, whom they historically have not served.



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Visit the [ATS website](#) for staff department updates, bios, and contact information.