

# ATS Women in Leadership initiative concludes three-year mentorship program

BY MARISSA DECHANT

*A group of 30 women gathered for the ATS Women in Leadership (WIL) Mentorship Celebration on March 20–22 in San Antonio, Texas. The event, which signified the end of the three-year mentorship program, was also the first time the group met in person due to the pandemic.*

Launched in March 2020, the WIL Mentoring Program began as a virtual initiative supported by the ATS Lilly Endowment-funded Leadership Education program. Titled “Mentoring the Next Generation of Leaders,” the program was designed to nurture a cadre of next generation gifted women leaders who will serve theological institutions in a variety of leadership capacities. The program included ten women serving as mentors and 30 women mentees divided into varied cohort groups.

Mary H. Young, ATS director of the Committee on Race and Ethnicity and WIL programs, oversaw the mentorship program and was present for the celebration event in San Antonio.

“The gathering was filled with thankfulness, appreciation, and joy at finally being together in person,” Young said. “The women talked about their journeys together and both the challenges and joys of staying connected during a pandemic-impacted reality.”

The event included time for connecting with one another, learning from the experience of being in the mentoring



program, and reflecting on the efficacy of mentoring as a leadership model for women in theological education.

In an opening plenary presentation, “Cultivating Interconnected Ecologies of Leadership: A Case for Mentoring and Advocacy,” Deborah H. C. Gin, ATS director of research and faculty development, discussed ATS WIL research regarding the importance of mentoring and advocacy in helping women to both build capacity for and gain access to senior leadership roles. Gin also shared testimonials from the program’s mentees who spoke about the impact of mentors and advocates in their vocational careers.

Garnetta Smith, director of the Center for Student Success at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary and a member of the WIL Advisory Committee, presented “The

Gift of Mentoring: Nurturing Newfound Friendships and Relationships.” She shared personal examples of mentoring relationships and how they changed over time, the ways in which some relationships are professional and others personal, the need to be aware that no mentor can possess every characteristic needed for a relationship, and how mentoring and advocacy must be an intentional process.

Chung-Yan (Joyce) Chan, incoming principal of the Canadian Chinese School of Theology Vancouver (effective August 1, 2023), led a “scriptural reflection through art” activity. Using her experience at the Vancouver Art Therapy Institute, Chan guided the women through a painting session that allowed them to explore thoughts around their careers and lives.

The concluding celebration event was also the last in-person gathering Young will oversee in her role at ATS, as she will retire in June. She joined ATS in 2017 as director of leadership education.

“It’s been transformative to watch the mentorship process—there are women who are now ready to mentor others, to pay forward the gift of being a co-companion in vocational journeying, and to build a wider web of influence and impact on the next generation of women leaders in theological education,” Young said.

One event participant noted in her evaluation that she appreciated “the opportunity to connect in person and fellowship. Since this was our first time coming together,

this was an extremely important and impactful opportunity. Building time in our days to break away early to spend time with one another in leisure settings was very valuable.”

Another participant said she most valued the mentor/mentee breakout sessions. She wrote, “After a few moments, we got vulnerable, took the risk of really naming some things, and it was liberating...It was so good to name it, see others nod, and realize I’m not alone.”



(from left to right) Khalia J. Williams, Meredith E. Hoxie Schol, Angela Davis-Baxter, and Jo-Ann Badley



Marissa Dechant is Communications Coordinator at The Association of Theological Schools in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.

See the next page for a full listing of the WIL Mentoring Program participants.

# ATS Women in Leadership Mentoring Program Participants

- **Jo-Ann Badley (Mentor)**, Ambrose Seminary of Ambrose University
- **Paula Blue**, Colgate Rochester Crozer Divinity School
- **Chung-Yan (Joyce) Chan**, Canadian Chinese School of Theology Vancouver (effective August 1, 2023)
- **Nannette Dixon**, McCormick Theological Seminary
- **Angela Rosita Cowser**, Louisville Presbyterian Theological Seminary
- **Angela Davis-Baxter**, Hood Theological Seminary
- **Constance Diggs**, Alliance Theological Seminary
- **Rebecca Eberhart**, Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary
- **Marsha Foster (Mentor)**, Ecumenical Theological Seminary
- **Ayanna Garrett**, Christian Theological Seminary
- **Deborah H. C. Gin (Mentor)**, The Association of Theological Schools
- **Tuuli Hannula**, Tyndale Seminary of Tyndale University
- **Christine Henderson**, Catholic Theological Union
- **Amelia Blanton Hibner**, Visitation Academy of St. Louis
- **Katerina Hinkle**, Ohio Northern University
- **Jana Holiday (Mentor)**, Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary
- **Melanie Johnson-DeBaufre (Mentor)**, Drew University Theological School
- **Amanda Avila Kaminski**, Texas Lutheran University
- **Windy Kidd**, Lexington Theological Seminary
- **Kathryn Kleinhans (Mentor)**, Trinity Lutheran Seminary at Capital University
- **Tara Kram**, World Hope International
- **Winnie Lui**, Associated Canadian Theological Schools
- **Alexandria Hofmann Macias**, North Park Theological Seminary
- **Deborah Martin**, Samuel DeWitt Proctor School of Theology of Virginia Union University
- **Esther Menn (Mentor)**, Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago
- **Nicole Mirando**, Union Theological Seminary
- **Margaret Mwenda**, Calvin Theological Seminary
- **Leslie Ortiz**, Saint Paul Area Synod
- **Sue K. Park**, Columbia Theological Seminary
- **Lallene Rector (Mentor)**, Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary
- **Loretta Rivers**, New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary
- **Meredith E. Hoxie Schol**, Drew University Theological School
- **Eileen Shanley-Roberts**, Bexley Hall Seabury-Western Theological Seminary Federation, Inc.
- **Myka Kennedy Stephens**, Lancaster Theological Seminary
- **Shanda Stricherz (Mentor)**, Kairos University
- **Betsy Wagner**, Emerge Counseling Center
- **Anne Walker**, Phillips Theological Seminary
- **Michelle J. Walker (Mentor)**, Union Presbyterian Seminary
- **Jessica Williams**, Central Baptist Theological Seminary
- **Khalia J. Williams**, Candler School of Theology of Emory University