

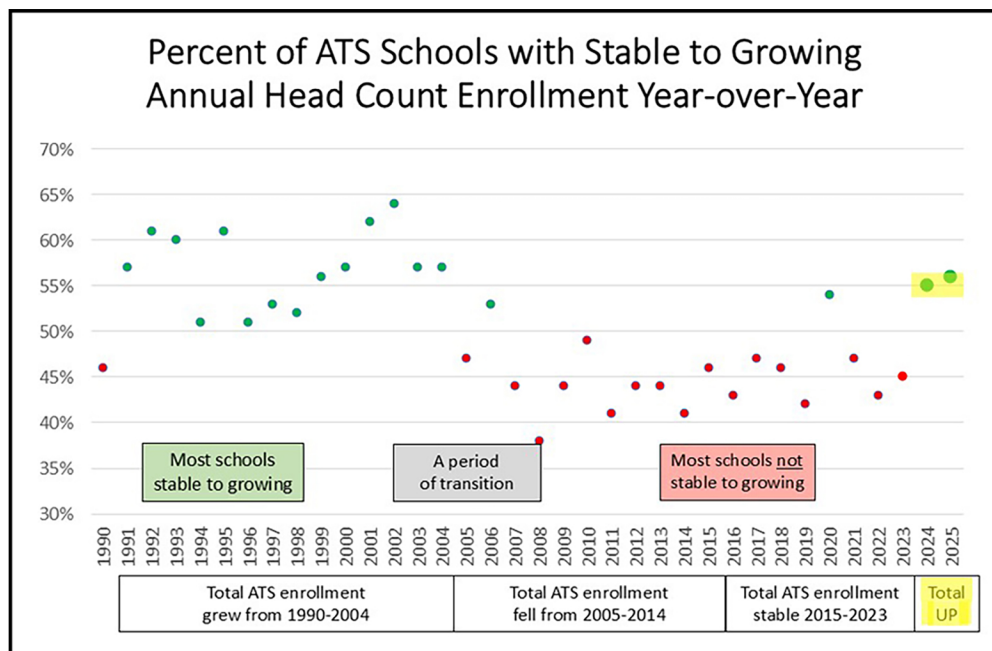
Fall 2025 enrollment data reveals promising trends

By CHRIS MEINZER

As of November 17, 2025, nearly 95 percent of 280 ATS member schools have reported enrollment data. Of the 264 reporting schools, fall enrollment has increased from 77,516 students in fall 2024 to 79,401 in fall 2025, an increase of 2.4 percent. **Notably, 146 schools, or 56 percent of those reporting, have shown year-over-year increases in headcount enrollment from fall 2024. This growth is broadly distributed across many ATS schools and represents one of several encouraging trends.**

Enrollment likely to be highest since 2006

ATS staff have been tracking year-over-year enrollment changes in ATS member schools since 1990. Each annual dot in the chart above represents the percentage of schools that grew year-over-year (for example, from fall 1989 to fall 1990, 46 percent of ATS member schools grew). The green dots indicate years when growth outpaced decline, and red dots show when decline outpaced growth. As the graph indicates, in nearly all years, more ATS member schools grew year-over-year from fall 1990 to fall 2006. During this same period, total enrollment grew to reach a maximum enrollment of more than 81,000 in fall 2006. From fall 2007 to fall 2023, more ATS member schools declined than grew year-over-year (except for the



COVID-19 year of fall 2020). This led to a period of falling enrollment across ATS member schools, with enrollment stabilizing mostly around fall 2015. **In fall 2024 and fall 2025, more member schools are growing year-over-year, which has led to total enrollment increases. While it is too early to determine if a new trend is emerging, this is a promising trend for these two years.**

Total enrollment across ATS member schools has been growing in the last two years. This is partly due to the addition of new member schools, but it has more to do with the broader trend of schools growing year-over-year as shown above. **As a result, the current trend in head count enrollment indicates that ATS member schools will likely educate more than 80,000 total students for the first time since 2006.** To derive an estimate of where enrollment will eventually land for fall 2025, ATS staff did a calculation assuming that the 16 schools that have not yet reported reflect the same numbers as fall 2024. These 16 schools reported 1,424 students across several different degree categories in fall 2024. While it is not likely that all 16 schools will report exactly the same enrollment, it is a reasonable estimate of their collective numbers.

Degree categories projected upward

As shown in the chart at right, total head count enrollment should be comfortably more than 80,000 students for the first time since 2006. Almost all degree categories are projected to be up in fall 2025, which continues to indicate that the growth in enrollment is broadly based. The number of degree-seeking students is estimated to be up more than 1 percent.

When looking at degree categories, some interesting trends can also be found when looking at fall 2024 and projected fall 2025 head count enrollment:

- **MDiv enrollment** is projected to be up, with an annual increase of 2.1 percent. *This would be the first annual increase in MDiv enrollment across ATS schools since 2018.* Of the schools that have reported so far, 56 percent have shown year-over-year increases in MDiv enrollment. By ecclesial family:
 - 58 percent of reporting evangelical schools grew, and MDiv enrollment increased by 3 percent;
 - 56 percent of mainline schools grew, with MDiv enrollment remaining flat;
 - 50 percent of Catholic/Orthodox schools grew, and MDiv enrollment declined by 2 percent.
- **MA enrollment** is projected to be up by 2.8 percent. MA enrollment, which had been a significant growth area across ATS member schools, has seen some variability in recent years. Fifty-six percent of schools reporting to-date reflect increases in MA enrollment. By ecclesial family:
 - 2 percent of reporting evangelical schools grew, and MA enrollment decreased by 1 percent;
 - 56 percent of mainline schools grew, and MA enrollment increased by 4 percent;
 - 70 percent of Catholic/Orthodox schools grew, and MA enrollment increased by 5 percent.
- **DMin enrollment** is projected to be essentially flat again this year. Like the MA, this degree category had been a substantial growth area for ATS schools for

Degree Category	Fall 2024	Projected Fall 2025	% Change
MDiv	26,052	26,605	2.1%
MA	29,426	30,239	2.8%
STM/THM	1,183	1,213	2.5%
DMin	9,979	10,001	0.2%
Other Prof Dr	1,484	1,403	-5.5%
PHD/THD	4,471	4,613	3.2%
Degree-seeking	72,595	74,074	2.0%
Non-Degree	6,345	6,751	6.4%
Total	78,940	80,138	2.4%

more than a decade, so it may be that this growth area is reflecting a new trend. Fifty-five percent of schools reporting reflected increases in this degree category. By ecclesial family:

- 2 percent of reporting evangelical schools grew, and DMin enrollment was down 1 percent;
 - 60 percent of mainline schools grew, and DMin enrollment was up 2 percent;
 - 44 percent of Catholic/Orthodox schools grew, with DMin enrollment flat in these schools.
- **PhD/ThD and STM/THM enrollment** shows increases, while Other Professional Doctor is the single degree category showing decline.
 - **Degree-seeking students** grew by 2 percent from fall 2024 to fall 2025. *This growth in degree-seeking students is driven by nearly all of the degree categories, so this is an exciting trend. And 74,000 degree-seeking students is the largest in the history of ATS!*
 - **Non-degree students** continue to be a high-growth area for ATS member schools. Many member schools place emphasis on non-degree enrollment, including schools that received Lilly Endowment Inc. Pathways for Tomorrow grants. Of the schools reporting so far, 58 percent show year-over-year increases. By ecclesial family:
 - 60 percent of reporting evangelical schools grew, and non-degree enrollment increased by 10 percent;
 - 57 percent of mainline schools grew, and non-degree enrollment decreased by 3 percent;

- 58 percent of Catholic/Orthodox schools grew, and non-degree enrollment increased by 3 percent.

The change in non-degree enrollment is represented equally among groups of schools that did and did not receive the Pathways for Tomorrow grants.

With this new data, there is much to celebrate!

It appears that ATS member schools will reflect overall enrollment increases. This seems to be a broader trend across all member schools, with 56 percent reflecting enrollment increases from fall 2024. For the second year in a row, more member schools have grown than declined. For the first time since 2006, more than 80,000 will be seeking education at an ATS

member school. MDiv and other degree categories show enrollment increases, with some significant changes noted and nearly all categories growing.

It is important for theological school leaders to be aware of these broader industry trends. Look for future *Colloquy* articles related to trends in full-time equivalent enrollment, total credit hours sold, admissions, and finances. In the meantime, if you have questions or want ATS staff to pursue some interesting subset of this data, please contact me at meinzer@ats.edu. Your good questions will likely benefit the larger membership, and that is one of the many benefits of being part of The Association of Theological Schools and the ATS Commission on Accrediting.



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