

# Interesting trends emerge in early ATS enrollment reporting

By CHRIS MEINZER

For several years, ATS has been requesting expedited fall enrollment data from member schools in order to provide timely feedback as to the trajectory of enrollment. As of October 28, more than 90% of ATS schools had reported data, and some interesting trends have emerged. As the remaining schools report, updated enrollment trends will be provided via [Engage ATS](#) and the November Colloquy Online.



With 91% reporting, there are positive enrollment trends. Of the 252 schools reporting, 135—or 54%—have shown enrollment increases. For this year, if this direction holds, it would reverse a trend that has occurred for most of the last decade in which only 45% of ATS schools have shown enrollment increases annually. During the uncertainty of the global pandemic, ATS schools have fared better in fall 2020 in terms of enrollment than they have in preceding years.

In terms of degree categories, there are also some interesting trends. As shown in the chart below, 42% of schools are showing MDiv enrollment increases while 58% of schools are showing MDiv enrollment decreases. In all other degree categories, the number of schools reporting enrollment increases exceeds those showing enrollment declines. In the MA categories, six out of ten schools have shown enrollment increases.

There are still 25 ATS schools that need to report their enrollment figures; however, if these trends hold, it is

	UP	DOWN
Total	54%	46%
MDiv	42%	58%
Professional MA	61%	39%
Academic MA	59%	41%
Advanced Professional	56%	44%
Advanced Academic	52%	48%
Other	52%	48%

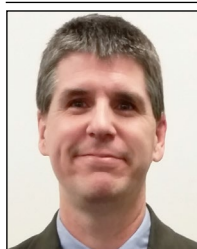
## 91% Schools Reporting

possible that overall enrollment will increase across ATS schools with relatively marked increases in MA enrollment. As of the writing of this article, the projected median enrollment change across ATS schools is projected to increase about 1.3%. If this development remains, this would be a reversal of a decade or more trend where the median enrollment change in ATS schools has been down about 1%.

In terms of ecclesial families, about 55% of evangelical protestant schools, 55% of mainline protestant schools, and 45% of Roman Catholic/Orthodox schools have shown enrollment increases. In terms of structure, about 55% of freestanding schools had enrollment increases

compared to about 50% for those schools connected to a college or university.

The academic and operational pivots that ATS schools have had to make because of the pandemic have been considerable, which makes the current enrollment trends even more notable. ATS schools and the students they serve have demonstrated resiliency in these times, and this durability has likely been supported by, among other things, a shift to online and hybrid educational offerings. The questions will now be how schools have adapted and what they have learned in the short-term that can be carried forward to enhance the long-term vitality of their missions.



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