

Lester Ruiz to lead global engagement strategy at ATS

By HEATHER CAMPAIN HARTUNG

Effective July 1, 2025, Lester Edwin J. Ruiz moved into a full-time role as director of global awareness and engagement at The Association of Theological Schools (ATS). This position signals a sharpened focus on the global dimensions of theological education and reflects Ruiz's long-standing commitment to fostering meaningful connections across cultures and institutions.

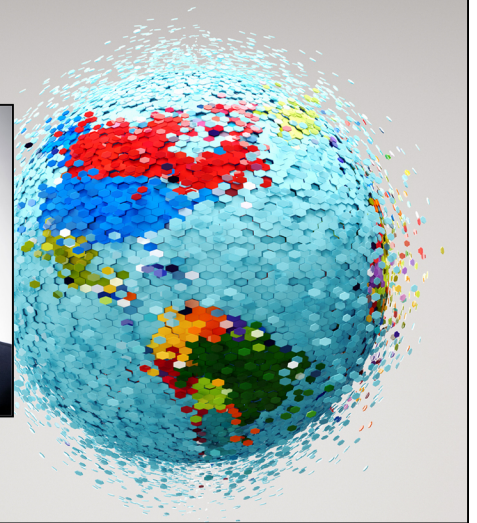
As director, Ruiz leads the Global Awareness and Engagement Initiative (GAEI), a central part of the Association's mission to promote theological education that is globally informed, contextually rooted, and responsive to today's complex realities. Through GAEI, he is advancing efforts to deepen intercultural understanding, strengthen international partnerships, and contribute to scholarly conversations that reach across boundaries. He also works with ATS colleagues to ensure that global awareness is woven throughout the Association's *Standards of Accreditation* and programs.

For more than 15 years, Ruiz has been a steady and visionary presence at ATS, most recently serving as director of accreditation and global engagement. In that role, in addition to supporting the accredited life of member schools, he helped shape the Association's understanding of theological education as a worldwide endeavor. His leadership through GAEI has encouraged mutual exchange, contextual learning, and collaboration among institutions across continents.

"Global engagement is not merely about expanding reach," he said, "but about cultivating relationships rooted in mutual respect, shared learning, and theological depth."



Lester Ruiz



Support for navigating global complexities

Ruiz's approach is grounded in a keen awareness of the shifting demographics of Christianity, including the rise of immigrant churches in North America and the increasing influence of the global South. Through collaborative degree programs, faculty exchanges, and immersion experiences, he has helped schools recognize their place within a wider, interconnected theological landscape. His new role extends this vision, positioning him to support institutions as they navigate global complexities with wisdom, humility, and courage.

Ordained by the Convention of Philippine Baptist Churches, Ruiz holds a BA in pastoral care and counseling from Ottawa University, as well as an MDiv with an emphasis on religion and society and a PhD in social ethics from Princeton Theological Seminary.

"Lester brings a rare combination of deep wisdom, unflinching passion, and a lifetime of global relationships to this work," said Frank Yamada, executive director at ATS. "His ability to see connections across cultures and institutions—and to help others do the same—makes him uniquely equipped to guide our

schools in engaging the world with integrity, humility, and vision.”

In addition to his work at ATS, Ruiz serves on the editorial boards of several international journals. He is co-editor of four published volumes, including *Re-Framing the International: Law, Culture, Politics*, and has contributed numerous chapters to books and articles to academic journals and periodicals. He also

chairs the executive committee of the Global Forum of Theological Educators and is a trustee of Ottawa University in Kansas. His appointment, together with the recently redefined role of director of culture and community engagement held by Elsie Miranda, reflects the Association’s continued investment in initiatives that foster connection, collaboration, and shared learning across diverse contexts.



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