



# The Association of Theological Schools The Commission on Accrediting

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*Frank M. Yamada • Executive Director*

March 13, 2020

Here is an update on the work of The Association of Theological Schools (ATS) and the ATS Commission on Accrediting in light of the evolving situation related to the Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19) situation.

As I had stated in my [email memo on March 9, 2020](#), the situations around the globe and in North America have been rapidly changing as governments, schools, and organizations seek to respond to this global health crisis. Since my last email, the [World Health Organization \(WHO\) declared the Coronavirus a pandemic](#). In response, hundreds of universities and colleges have sent students home for the spring, have announced online teaching plans for the semester, and/or have encouraged staff and faculty to work from home.

In order to respond to this continuously changing situation, and to prioritize the health and safety of those within ATS schools and communities, I can share the following decisions and updated information:

– On programs and services, the following ATS leadership education and engagement events have been postponed to future dates in the fall:

- [2020 Student Personnel Administrators' Conference \(Jacksonville, FL\)](#)
- [Women in Leadership Mentoring Program Launching Conference \(Jacksonville, FL\)](#)
- [2020 Roundtable Seminar for New Faculty \(Jacksonville, FL\)](#)
- Small Schools Gathering (Pittsburgh, PA)

– On accreditation matters of Commission schools, we recognize the need for schools to ensure the safety and health of faculty, staff, and students while remaining committed to the quality of their educational mission. The Board of Commissioners will be communicating today about approved options for educational flexibility given the current Coronavirus situation. You can read that communication [here](#).

– On accreditation visits, the Commission will continue to conduct comprehensive and focused visits to schools as long as this remains a safe and prudent option. The Board of Commissioners is allowing flexibility regarding the use of technologies during comprehensive and focused visits on a temporary basis, and has also granted Commission staff the collective discretion to postpone comprehensive or focused visits when appropriate. Commission staff are in regular contact with schools and evaluation committee members regarding options for upcoming visits.



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– Regarding the 2020 ATS/COA Biennial Meeting, which is currently scheduled to take place in Vancouver, British Columbia, on June 24–25, 2020, staff members are working with the boards to develop contingency plans that will best respond to the unknowns of the current environment. By March 26, 2020, I will notify you with updated information about the plans for the biennial meeting. This date is 90 days before the meeting, which is the time required by ATS/COA bylaws for the notification of the membership.

– Both the Association and Commission staff will continue to conduct business. If you have questions related to the business of the Association or the Commission, please contact the appropriate staff person at the ATS offices.

– We continue to encourage schools to be aware of updated information from the [Centers for Disease Control](#), the [Public Health Agency of Canada](#), and the [World Health Organization](#) as schools participate in the common good by taking the necessary steps to contribute to public health and the safety of those within their schools.

Peace and grace,  
Frank Yamada  
Executive Director  
The Association of Theological Schools