

# Mission & Money: Are yours in alignment?

BY CHRIS MEINZER

For the first time in ATS history, the spending across all ATS member schools exceeded \$2 billion for FY2018. That number has been on the rise for the past decade, with the annual increase in spending across ATS schools averaging about 3%. The only declines in spending in recent years came in 2008 and 2009 during the great recession, but spending increases began again in 2010 and have continued for nearly a decade.



and place, or on faculty and facility. Again, the spending matrix of schools varies as widely as their missions. The key is to ensure that all of the resources (human, financial, physical) are in service of the mission.

In terms of how ATS schools spend their resources, on average, about 35% to 45% of the total is spent on instruction and support, about 45% to 55% on institutional support, and about 10% on scholarship.

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Of course, these percentages vary widely school by school in the same way total spending is widely varied by institution. Looking at it another way, schools spend about 65% to 75% of their total budget on compensating staff and another 10% to 20% on maintaining their facilities. I often say that the majority of spending across ATS schools is on people

When I am having discussions with administrations and boards, I always ask what they believe to be the largest driver of how they spend their budgets within the institutions. I hear lots of different responses, but the most consistent are personnel costs. As noted earlier, this is technically a true statement. However, based upon my 20+ years of working on Mission & Money, I have concluded that there is an even bigger driver to how schools employ their resources. I believe the largest driver in how schools use their human, financial, and physical resources is . . . history.

Administrative and academic personnel grow up over time. Expenditure budgets morph—often incrementally—through the years. Campuses, libraries, and chapels are important reminders of the historic enterprise in which schools are engaged—the crossroads of higher education and the church. Nonetheless, unless careful attention is given, the resources of the schools could be supporting a mission of the past rather than the present.

## ATS MEMBER SCHOOLS ~ Expenditures per School ~

	Average
All schools	\$7.5 million
Freestanding schools	\$8.5 million
Embedded schools	\$6 million

The way a school is using its financial, human, and physical resources might be in service to a mission the school is called *from* rather than a mission *to which* the school is called now or into the future.

Given the constant and substantial change in higher education and the church, theological schools must be engaged in ongoing and thorough assessments of their missions. In the same way, theological schools must give substantive energy to a continuous and systematic

appraisal of the ways in which they are using their resources in fulfillment of their missions. If done correctly, this assessment and understanding of Mission & Money is not done in a mutually exclusive way; the mission and resources of a school must be measured to ensure that they complement each other. And the evaluation must ensure that the resources are serving the mission of the present and future and not the mission of the past.

So think about your own institution and how the mission and resources of the school are measured and assessed:

1. Is the appropriateness of your mission evaluated periodically?
2. Do you measure the achievement of the success of your mission at different levels?
3. How do you ensure that the mission is one of the present or future and not one of the past?
4. In the same way, how do you make sure that the resources of the school are reasonable, sustainable, and appropriate for the mission to which the school is called?
5. How do you measure successful achievement of the vitality and usefulness of those resources toward fulfilling the current mission?

A good practice in the assessment of Mission & Money is to use outside benchmarks. In terms of a school's evaluation of its resources, ATS offers a number of items that can help. The [ATS Strategic Information Report \(SIR\)](#) or the [Institutional Peer Profile Report \(IPPR\)](#) can help provide objective measures against which a school can evaluate its effective and efficient use of resources. In addition, I have developed a [five-phase approach](#) to help schools discover where they are situated in the broader context of North American theological education. If you have any questions about this article, the concept of Mission & Money, and how to best assess them in a complementary way, or if you have interest in the five-phase approach, please contact me at [meinzer@ats.edu](mailto:meinzer@ats.edu).

### **What is "Money?"**

*Our conversations about Mission & Money are designed to discuss the interrelationship between the mission of a school and the resources it uses to fulfill that mission. Therefore, the term "money" in Mission & Money denotes all of the human, financial, and physical resources available and used by the school.*



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