

New resource will aid accreditation liaison officers in their work

By BARBARA MUTCH

To support accreditation liaison officers (ALOs) in their important work—and chief academic officers, too, as this work belongs to that role in many schools—ATS recently created a dedicated Canvas site called “ALO/CAO Orientation,” which can be found on the ATS website under “Accreditation” in the main menu.

Accreditation liaison officers of ATS member schools are responsible for understanding the Standards of Accreditation and the Policies and Procedures, “translating” them into digestible soundbites for the administration and faculty, and guiding the schools into appropriate alignment according to their missions and contexts.

The new orientation site describes the role and responsibilities of the ALO, provides a primer on ATS and the Board of Commissioners (BOC), introduces the documents that guide the relationship between every member school and the BOC, instructs the ALO about accrediting activities that happen infrequently, annually, and periodically, and connects the ALOs to the ATS liaisons assigned to their schools.

Marge Piercy’s celebration of hard work and those who do it makes me think of ALOs at ATS member schools. In many ways, the ALO is like a guide for his or her school as it navigates its life as an accredited ATS member. ALOs also function as a bridge and are usually the ones who communicate with the assigned ATS staff liaison, regularly submit any petitions or



*... I love people who harness themselves, an ox to a heavy cart,
who pull like water buffalo, with massive patience,
who strain in the mud and the muck to move things forward,
who do what has to be done, again and again.*

*I want to be with people who submerge
in the task, who ...
move in a common rhythm
when the food must come in or the fire be put out.*

*The work of the world is common as mud.
Botched, it smears the hands, crumbles to dust.
But the thing worth doing well done
has a shape that satisfies, clean and evident.
Greek amphoras for wine or oil,
Hopi vases that held corn, are put in museums
but you know they were made to be used.
The pitcher cries for water to carry
and a person for work that is real.*

—“To be of use” by Marge Piercy

notifications, and often coordinate the personnel who collate and enter data for the Annual Report Form.

ALOs study the ATS guiding documents and ask “How can the *Standards* help us maintain quality theological education?” and “How can we best implement the *Standards* at our school?” ALOs help a school to create processes that integrate accreditation into the life of the school so the processes become sustainable practices that thrive in a culture of continuous evaluation, planning, and improvement. That’s hard work!

Experienced ALOs contributed to and vetted the new orientation site and declare it to be clearly structured, easily navigable, thorough, and incredibly helpful for new ALOs. We hope you will find it helpful to the work that you do.

In the words of one ALO, “ATS is genuinely committed to improving higher education in the Christian and Jewish communities . . . folks are genuinely interested in helping the ALO and school to do better at what it does well.”



Barbara Mutch is Senior Director of Accreditation at The Association of Theological Schools in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.