

Rediscover your ATS membership perks at upcoming Biennial Meeting

BY LISA KERN

Being a member of The Association of Theological Schools (ATS) offers many benefits, depending on your specific needs and goals within the field of graduate theological education. Below are several reasons why schools have found their ATS membership to be so valuable—all of which you can rediscover at the 2024 ATS/COA Biennial Meeting.



Accreditation and quality assurance

The ATS Commission on Accrediting is recognized by the United States Secretary of Education and by the Council for Higher Education Accreditation. Being affiliated with an accredited theological institution enhances the credibility and quality of your institution's programs, and it is often important for students, faculty, and potential donors. ATS member schools are part of a supportive peer community that hold one another accountable to quality assurance and continued improvement. To assist member schools beginning the self-study process, the Commission invites those with visits scheduled in the next two years to participate in a self-study workshop. Events are also held to equip experienced peer reviewers to work effectively with the *ATS Standards of Accreditation* through an emphasis on case studies, to review expectations for accreditation visits, and for participants to share their wisdom with other peer reviewers.



AT THE BIENNIAL: Connect with your school's ATS accrediting staff liaison during a "meet and greet" session.

Networking opportunities

ATS membership provides access and opportunities to connect with other graduate theological institutions, educators, and administrators. This interfaith network can be valuable for sharing ideas, best practices, and resources. Engage ATS—the Association's customized online community, launched in 2019 and growing each year—has proven to be a popular space for members to ask questions, collaborate, and converse before, during, and after ATS leadership development events.



AT THE BIENNIAL: Meet new colleagues and cultivate existing relationships with fellow members and ATS staff during breaks and free time built into the agenda for fellowship.

Access to industry data and research

ATS provides member institutions with free data and benchmarking tools—the Annual Data Tables, the Data Visualization Tool, the Strategic Information Report, and the Institutional Peer Profile Report—that can be useful for assessing and improving various aspects of their programs. This data can help you understand how your

school compares to others in the field and in the larger industry. ATS members also have access to research publications, articles, and other resources that can be beneficial for staying informed about the latest developments and scholarship in graduate theological education. *Colloquy Online*, the Association's monthly member newsletter, features trends in theological education, research findings and reflections by ATS administrators and faculty, recommended best practices, and ATS news.



AT THE BIENNIAL: Learn more about institutional data, industry research, and other resources gathered and maintained by various ATS member schools and staff that will be on display.

Professional development

For more than 40 years, administrators and faculty at ATS member schools have benefited from the communities of practice that support them with peer networking and shared knowledge through various conferences, workshops, and resources for professional development. These may include in-person or virtual sessions on pedagogy, leadership, and current trends in theological education. Attending these events and staying updated on these areas can enhance your skills, knowledge, and effectiveness in your role as well as foster a sense of community and growth across the Association.



AT THE BIENNIAL: Attend two different workshop sessions led by your member school peers and ATS staff with proven success and expertise on relevant topics.

Collaborative projects and professional support

ATS is involved in various collaborative grants and initiatives in which members can participate, strengthening the sense of community. These include innovative

projects, curriculum development, and other combined efforts that contribute to the advancement of theological education. ATS and its sister organizations also offer services and support for member schools including guidance on accreditation processes, sustainability planning, governance, and user-centered design among others.



AT THE BIENNIAL: Walk through the Resource and Innovation Expo to discover what your fellow member schools are learning from current projects and how other organizations in the industry may assist you with your work.

Advocacy and representation

ATS advocates for the interests of theological schools and educators at a national level. As a member, you may have the opportunity to contribute to discussions about policies, regulations, and other issues affecting the Association.



AT THE BIENNIAL: One leader from each member school is invited to vote on business matters pertaining to the Commission and to the Association during two different business sessions.

"The Biennial Meeting is a reminder that we do not function simply as individual schools but together as an ecosystem through this one unique association," said Chris Meinzer, senior director and COO at ATS. "Attending the Biennial Meeting is a reminder and a physical representation of what we are doing all the time by offering an opportunity for us to see something bigger than ourselves at work."



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