

Stephen Graham retires from ATS after nearly 19 years of service

Stephen Graham retired July 1, 2026, after working almost 19 years at The Association of Theological Schools (ATS), most recently as strategic director of context and continuity and director of accreditation.

Graham joined the ATS staff in January 2008 as director of faculty development and initiatives in theological education and served as senior director of programs and services from 2013 to 2020. After serving on the task force to redevelop the *Standards of Accreditation*, he became a director of accreditation in 2020 and was named strategic director of context and continuity in 2021.

“Steve always cared deeply for the schools and experienced joy from the particular ways that they sought to be faithful to their diverse missions,” said ATS Executive Director Frank M. Yamada. “For several years after (former Executive Director) Dan Aleshire’s retirement, Steve was a dean to the deans and presidents of ATS. He lived out the mission and core values of the Association in each of his interactions with faculty, senior administrators, or school personnel.”

He led a number of initiatives for the Association, including its work on preparation for ministry in a multifaith society, projects on the financial health and governance of theological schools, and the wide-ranging study of Educational Models and Practices in theological education. He provided a historical perspective on the Association’s identity and what it has been as an organization, worked to contextualize the Association’s past legacy and its present, and contributed to reflections about its future. He has published two books—*Cosmos in the Chaos: Philip Schaff’s Interpretation of Nineteenth Century American Religion* and *Come to the Table: North Park Covenant Church, 1898–1998, A Century of Heritage and Hope*—as well as numerous articles on the history of Christianity in the United States and theological education.



Stephen Graham retired from ATS on July 1, 2026

“Steve’s work with member schools in accreditation was marked by the steadiness, depth of knowledge, and human understanding that were demonstrated throughout his years of leading programs and initiatives for the Association,” said Barbara Mutch, ATS senior director of accreditation. “His influence will long exceed his tenure through the many guiding documents he prepared that will continue to serve the work of the Board of Commissioners for the sake of member schools. Steve brought to accreditation an understanding of the hopes of theological education and the current contexts and challenges encountered by member schools, an enduring faithfulness to the work of the Board and all his colleagues in the accrediting staff, and the winsome virtues of a well-formed Christian.”

Prior to ATS, Graham served as the dean of faculty and professor of American church history at North Park Theological Seminary in Chicago. As an academic dean, he was

active in the Chief Academic Officers' Society of ATS and for several years provided ATS staff leadership for that group as well as guiding development of the ATS School for New Deans. He also led the Association's work with chief executive officers for many years. He directed the Association's faculty grants programs, including the Lilly Theological Research Grants program, from 2008 to 2013, and the Henry Luce III Fellows in Theology program from 2008 to 2019.

"The greatest highlight of working at ATS has been the many opportunities to interact with the outstanding staff and hundreds of people from member schools,

especially the faculty grants and leadership education events, the Educational Models and Practices project, and accreditation visits," said Graham. "There are countless individual interactions that I remember with a smile and a feeling of joy."

Graham continues to reside in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, with his wife, Sharon, and their surrounding children and grandchildren. Alongside more quality time with his family, he hopes to catch up on reading, become more involved in his church, and work on further research projects.