

Tom Tanner and Mary Young to retire from ATS staff in June 2022

BY *MARISSA DECHANT*

Two ATS staff members have announced their intent to retire next June. Tom Tanner, director of accreditation, and Mary Young, director of leadership education, will retire after ten years and five years of work at ATS, respectively.



Tanner joined the ATS staff in 2012 after serving for 33 years in various academic leadership roles at Lincoln Christian University in Lincoln, Illinois. His work at ATS includes facilitating accrediting reviews, providing education and support to member schools about the process of accreditation, and providing staff support to the work of the Board of Commissioners of the ATS Commission on Accrediting. Tanner also served as the Commission staff liaison to the US Department of Education and the Council for Higher Education Accreditation.

He is a licensed minister among Christian Churches and Churches of Christ, having served as resident and visiting minister for several congregations in Illinois.



Tanner with his wife, Debby, and grandson, Peyton.

Tanner lives with his wife, Debby, in Avon, Indiana, where he relocated last fall as part of his transition to working remotely and being closer to family.

He hopes to spend his time doing some preaching, researching for special projects, and visiting his grandson Peyton, who graduated from Marine boot camp in August 2021.

“One of the highlights of my 40-plus years in graduate theological education was helping to lead the 2018–2020 redevelopment process for the new *ATS Standards of Accreditation*, approved by the membership 198 to 1 in June 2020,” Tanner said. “My greatest joy, however, has been in serving ATS member schools and getting to know so many of them on a personal basis.”

“Tom, during his accrediting career with ATS, has provided depths of wisdom, wells of experience, and a care for the schools that has contributed deeply to their improvement and quality,” said Frank Yamada, ATS executive director. “His work in staffing the process for the redevelopment of the Standards—a once-in-a-generation task for the Commission—was pure genius. These new Standards will remain as a lasting legacy for the Commission. We, the staff, and the member schools owe a debt of gratitude to Tom for the leadership he provided through that process.”

Young joined the ATS staff in 2017 after 23 years of service in numerous academic leadership roles at Samuel DeWitt Proctor School of Theology of Virginia Union University in Richmond, Virginia. She has been responsible for planning and implementing leadership education programs for administrators in ATS member schools, including conferences and workshops for academic officers, development personnel, financial officers, and student personnel administrators as well as the programs for Women in Leadership and the Committee on Race and Ethnicity.

Ordained in The American Baptist Churches, Young has served as minister of education at several churches in the Richmond area and written church school curricula for the denomination.

Young lives in North Chesterfield, Virginia, where she recently relocated during the transition to remote work. She hopes to stay connected to academia through adjunct teaching, publishing, and consulting; to serve with agencies working to empower minoritized

communities; and to complete several writing projects. Young also plans to travel with family and spend quality time with her grandchildren.

“As I reflect on my time at ATS, there are a proliferation of experiences that I have appreciated. My work with school leaders, across the spectrum, has been enriching and rewarding,” Young said. “I will cherish these experiences, along with the opportunity to be a partner with colleagues at ATS as a hallmark of my professional and vocational life.”

“Mary and I started weeks apart at ATS. She has been, from day one, a remarkable colleague in the Association’s work to form leaders. As director of leadership education, she was a leader among leaders. She also sought to empower the many advisory committees that oversee the Association’s programs in this incredible time of change in theological schools. I, the staff, and the member schools were blessed to experience her leadership during this critical period,” said Yamada.



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