ATS Programs & Services
for theological education

The Association of Theological Schools
The Commission on Accrediting
The Association of Theological Schools (ATS) is a membership organization of more than 270 graduate schools of theology that educate leaders for communities of faith as well as scholars and teachers of the theological disciplines. **ATS Programs & Services** shares best practices, builds peer networks, gathers data, engages in research, and develops resources that help leaders in theological education to excel in their work.

In addition to the following regularly scheduled events, ATS hosts supplemental webinars for which announcements are sent electronically and posted on the ATS website, www.ats.edu.
ATS Programs & Services supports the improvement and enhancement of theological schools through leadership education, research, focused initiatives, and resources for institutional assessment.

ATS Programs & Services: Education, Information, Research, and Resources
For Administrators

Administrator programs gather as many as 900 theological school leaders annually for peer education in communities of practice.

ATS/COA Biennial Meetings
*By registration.* Biennial Meetings not only offer the opportunity to participate in the business sessions of the Association and the Commission but also invite the leaders of member schools and related organizations to grapple with current issues and to think critically about how in the future their institutions will offer theological education in the most effective ways possible—ways that respond to the changing world, embrace innovation, promote collaboration, and offer truly sustainable solutions.

Chief Academic Officers
*By registration.* Annual meetings provide educational and professional development opportunities, a collegial network, and a context for nurturing the vocation of chief academic officers and visioning their future development. *Hosted by the Chief Academic Officers Society (CAOS) of ATS.*

New Deans
*By application.* Designed for academic deans in their first year or two of service, the annual School for New Deans provides new deans with important information and nurtures the development of the skills that will make their work more effective and fulfilling. It will acquaint new deans with the resources available to theological schools through ATS, facilitate connections among academic deans serving within the distinctive world of theological education, and continue the process of formation into the vocation of the academic deanship.
The following gives a general overview of the offerings of ATS Programs & Services. Please see the Resources menu on the ATS website, www.ats.edu, for details.

For Administrators

African American Presidents/Deans and Chief Academic Officers

*By invitation.* Annual meetings provide African American presidents, deans, and chief academic officers the opportunity to discuss areas of common interest and concern.

New Presidents

*By registration; limited to those in their first three years in office.* Annual seminars feature experienced leaders who guide new presidents through issues associated with the president’s role as CEO. Speakers address the economic equilibrium model of financial stability, institutional advancement, faculty relations, and team building.

Presidential Leadership Intensive

*By registration; open to all ATS presidents.* Annual intensives focus on timely issues related to the role of the president and on building skills for effective performance. Conference sessions cover topics featured in the *Handbook for Seminary Presidents,* with most topics covered at least once during the course of a three-year curriculum rotation. Preconference meetings address the needs of those who lead schools with distinctive characteristics.

Development Officers

*By registration.* Annual conferences offer workshops on topics related to annual giving, planned gifts, personnel management, internal and external collaboration, and communications, with opportunities for professional development and peer interaction in a distinctly theological context. *Hosted by the Development and Institutional Advancement Program (DIAP) of ATS.*
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For Administrators

Financial Officers
By registration. Plenaries and workshops provide tools and peer learning annually to enhance the financial officer’s skills. Topics cover issues such as financing theological education, budgets and modeling techniques, faculty and staff compensation strategies, financial dashboards and ratios, investment spending rates, and HR compliance issues. Hosted by the Chief Financial Officers Society (CFOS) of ATS.

Student Personnel Administrators
By registration. Annual conferences provide a collegial network for support, information sharing, and professional development for admissions directors, financial aid officials, registrars, deans of students, housing officers, and career services personnel among others. The conferences include practical how-to workshops, complemented by presentations common to those who work with students in theological education. Hosted by the Student Personnel Administrators Network (SPAN) of ATS.

Technology Professionals
By registration. Periodic webinars and events facilitate interaction and collaboration among technology professionals and provide a venue to discuss issues such as knowledge of available technical tools and learning theory models. Hosted by the Technology in Theological Education Group (TTEG) of ATS.
Faculty programs support academic scholarship and the vocation of theological educators.

**Newly Appointed Faculty**
*By nomination of academic dean.* Designed for faculty who have completed their first or second year in an ATS member school, annual roundtable seminars address the unique vocation—both individual and corporate—of theological educators. Academic deans reflect on what they have learned from working with faculty, and faculty members share their experiences of surviving and thriving as theological educators.

**Midcareer Faculty**
*By nomination of academic dean.* Designed for faculty in the middle stage of their careers, annual roundtable seminars offer the opportunity to discuss issues of common concern and explore next steps as they experience life after tenure and emerge into leadership positions in their institutions.

**Henry Luce III Fellows in Theology Conference**
*By invitation.* Henry Luce III Fellows in Theology grant recipients present summaries of their research and engage in an interdisciplinary discussion of their projects with conversation facilitators and invited guests.

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Student Data

ATS offers member institutions several resources related to student data and assessment.

Student Questionnaires
ATS has developed three online questionnaires focused on student data useful for institutional evaluation and enhancement:

- Entering Student Questionnaire
- Graduating Student Questionnaire
- Alumni Questionnaire

Questionnaires gather data related to student demographics, educational debt levels, professional plans, pathways to seminary, and student perceptions about the effectiveness of their education.

Participating schools receive institutional peer reports, access to customized reports, and inclusion in the Total School Profile which provides representative data on students in theological education in the United States and Canada.

Profiles of Ministry
Profiles of Ministry (POM) is a program that helps assess personal characteristics of students for ministry as well as their perceptions of ministry. Through casebooks, interviews, and field observation, the POM program provides individual and group profiles that can be used in institutional evaluation and assessment.

Workshops and webinars are held regularly to provide ongoing training in the use of the questionnaires and the POM program.
Research

The research function of ATS includes three categories of work: (1) research support for existing work groups and projects, (2) ATS database research, and (3) research on theological education, which addresses larger questions in the world of theological education, both for member schools and for broader publics.

Two values guide the work of this new function: humility and hospitality. Good data can inform good decisions, but data must be approached with a critical openness to learning and growth, an informational humility. And, while good data will provide institutions with the information they need to improve, institutions also need to know what kinds of data are available, which data will help them, and how to interpret the data. A sense of hospitality ensures that we continue to make ATS data usable by all institutions (e.g., future plans include interactive data tables and more constituent-specific webinars).

Activities currently underway
- Educational Models Mapping, Survey Parts I & II, and Interview
- Educational Models Survey of Graduates
- Women in Leadership Comprehensive Research Study
- Engaging Science in Seminaries Project
- Establishment of Research Database and Connections to ATS/COA Database
Initiatives in Theological Education

Initiatives focus on issues of particular interest through research, publications, and educational programs.

Educational Models and Practices of Theological Education
The Educational Models and Practices project will explore current and developing models and practices among ATS member schools, assess their effectiveness in educating students for the 21st century, and affirm effective models and practices by incorporating them into the character and work of the Association and the Commission.

The project will engage six areas of work to gather comprehensive information about educational activities across the membership and the contexts and nature of their graduates’ work, to study other patterns of graduate professional education for insights that can be applied to theological education, to provide small grants to support innovative practices and faculty development, and through all that is learned to inform a substantive redevelopment of the Commission on Accrediting’s Standards of Accreditation.

Economic Challenges Facing Future Ministers (ECFFM)
ATS serves as the coordinator for Lilly Endowment’s ECFFM Initiative, a grant program designed to help reduce educational debt and increase financial literacy for seminary students through research, education, institutional strategies, and collaborative partnerships. Sixty-seven schools have each developed their own unique program to address the economic challenges facing their students. Through the work of coordination, ATS seeks to enhance the impact of the project by providing opportunities for collaboration, sharing of resources, and broader research on the topic of educational debt and institutional finances.
Initiatives in Theological Education

Science for Seminaries
ATS is in a partnership with The American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS) in a project for which the AAAS has received grant funding from the Templeton Foundation. Through this collaboration, 10 ATS member schools received major funding to develop ways to integrate science into their core theological curricula.

The Templeton Foundation has also awarded ATS with a grant to fund a two-year study, “Engaging Science in Seminaries,” to establish a baseline understanding of teaching about science within Protestant schools in the United States and Canada. The three-part project will document what is being done in theological schools, revealing strengths to be accentuated and weaknesses to be addressed by future programming.

Committee on Race and Ethnicity (CORE)
The goal of this work will be to provide schools with resources that would (1) enable schools to define success in their efforts related to racial/ethnic diversity; (2) help schools think critically and theologically about issues related to race, ethnicity, and diversity; and (3) guide schools with regard to practical institutional or educational steps to take on issues related to race and ethnicity.

Women in Leadership (WIL)
WIL hosts two conferences: Advancing Women in Leadership Conferences in odd numbered years and Emerging Women in Leadership Conferences in even numbered years. Planning is also underway for activities, including a survey study of participants in past Women in Leadership programs regarding their experience and a survey study of women currently in faculty and/or administrative roles regarding perceptions and opinions about their work in theological education.