

# ATS hosts first virtual self-study workshop for member schools

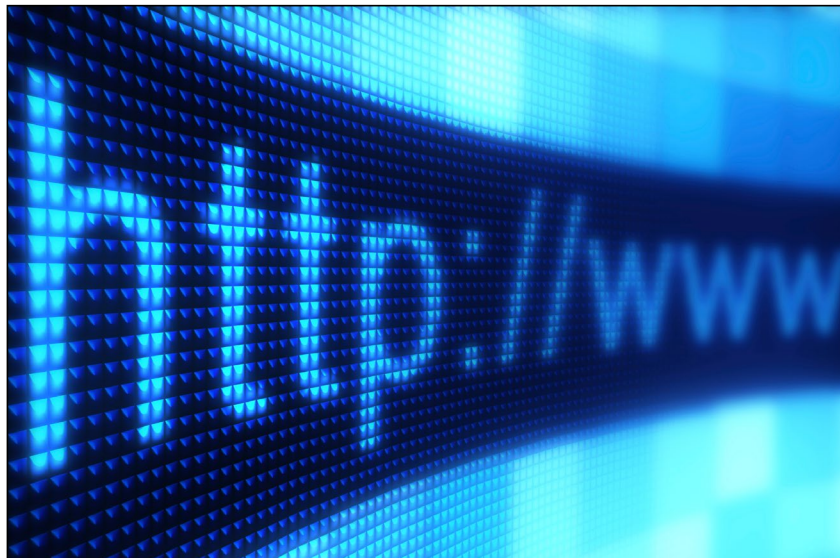
BY MARISSA DECHANT

Twenty-seven participants from 14 ATS member schools gathered September 17 and 18, for the first virtual Commission on Accrediting Self-Study Workshop.

This free event is offered to assist schools with visits scheduled in the next two years on how to begin the self-study process. Other objectives include learning to value the role of the *Standards and Procedures* and appreciating the role of evaluation and assessment.

The workshop engaged participants during the synchronous sessions by using virtual breakout rooms and a chat function. “We restructured the workshop from its face-to-face format to become a combination of synchronous and asynchronous modules,” said Barbara Mutch, ATS director of accreditation. “Synchronous sessions were presented as PowerPoint presentations using Zoom.”

Mutch welcomed the group and provided introductions. She presented an overview of the self-study process that encompassed the self-study process, the comprehensive evaluation visit by the evaluation committee, and the consequent actions by the ATS Board of Commissioners. She stated that the schools present would be the first to use the newly adopted *Standards of Accreditation*, which were approved by the membership at the 2020 ATS/COA Biennial Meeting in June.



In addition to Mutch, three other directors from the ATS staff led individual sessions throughout the workshop: Elsie Miranda, director of accreditation; Lester Edwin J. Ruiz, director of accreditation and global engagement; and Tom Tanner, director of accreditation.

Tanner was responsible for introducing participants to the new *Standards of Accreditation*. He also provided an opportunity to engage with the *Standards* in relation to each participant’s institutional and educational context.

Tanner described the new *Standards* as a flexible guide for schools, rather than a set path to be followed.

He gave a second presentation on the self-study process, which overviewed the characteristics of good self-study reports.

Other presentations included Miranda’s, with a review of the accrediting standards related to institutional and educational evaluation. She also explored how a self-study



ATS Director of Accreditation Barbara Mutch welcomes participants to the first virtual ATS self-study workshop.

should describe and implement its own evaluation processes for the sake of educational and institutional improvement.

Ruiz presented models for guiding an institution through its self-study process, with attention to committee structures, work timelines, and stakeholder involvement.

“The sessions take an up-close look at the self-study process and also step back so participants can see the entire landscape and picture,” said Mutch.

The use of institutional data and student data for evaluation purposes were presented through asynchronous modules prepared by two ATS staff members—Chris Meinzer, senior director of administration and COO, and Jo Ann Deasy, director of institutional initiatives and student research.

Joshua Reinders, ATS accrediting coordinator, handled the workshop registration process and assisted with the logistics of the virtual gathering.

Following the workshop, participants gave overall positive feedback.

“Being able to see a big picture of the self-study process was most helpful for me as a newcomer,” said one participant. “It was executed really as an in-person workshop, given in a virtual environment.”

“I enjoyed the concrete explanations of the process and the ability to ask questions of our liaison about our specific situation,” said another.

The next self-study workshop will be February 22 and 23, 2021. Schools are invited to attend the workshop two years prior to their scheduled accreditation visits. This is the fifth academic year that ATS has both offered a second self-study workshop and the first year it has been offered virtually.



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