



The Association of Theological Schools The Commission on Accrediting

10 Summit Park Drive, Pittsburgh, PA 15275-1110
T: 412-788-6505 • F: 412-788-6510 • www.ats.edu

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

JULY 25, 2018

Contact:

Eliza Smith Brown
412-977-3939
brown@ats.edu

DEBBIE CREAMER AND LESTER EDWIN J. RUIZ TO ASSUME NEW ROLES AT ATS

PITTSBURGH—The Association of Theological Schools (ATS) has announced that two of its accreditors have been named to new roles within the organization. Debbie Creamer has been appointed as senior director of accreditation, and Lester Edwin J. Ruiz has been named director of accreditation and global engagement.



In her new role as senior director, Creamer will lead the accrediting staff of seven individuals, 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. She will continue to serve as liaison to more than 50 ATS member schools and work with the Association's assessment and visitor orientation resources. The new role will also include supporting her staff colleagues and the Association as a whole in areas of strategic planning, leadership development, and other activities that help further the ATS mission.

"I look forward to this new opportunity to provide leadership and service among the ATS staff and our 279 member schools, while still being able to maintain direct contact with folks at our schools who are doing the hard and complicated work of theological education itself," said Creamer. "Particularly as we enter into the process of redeveloping the Commission's *Standards and Procedures*, the time seems right for great conversations about the role and work of accrediting, including exploring together how we name, embody, and assess minimum expectations and aspirational goals across our schools as well as how we support one another, in our similarities and our distinctiveness, in these times of change. I'm excited to be part of these conversations and to help foster them in ways that grow out of my commitments as a practical theologian and are informed by the gift I've had of visiting and working with many different ATS schools across the years," she said.

Ruiz will continue to serve as liaison to a portfolio of more than 60 ATS member schools while also championing the Association's commitment to increased global engagement. His work in that area has already included exploration of global conversations and partnership opportunities with a planning grant from the Henry Luce Foundation, as well as helping to organize the Global Forum for Theological Education that ATS co-convened in Germany in 2016, and hosting a recent conversation among more than 150 theological educators at the ATS Centennial Biennial Meeting in June. Future initiatives will continue to explore and build strategic partnerships with theological educators worldwide.



"These partnerships can only enhance the work we are doing," said Ruiz. "ATS has been working toward cultivating a more global theological perspective since the 1980s. As the center of gravity of worldwide Christianity continues to shift to the Global South, it is imperative that we look to our counterparts in other parts of the world to ensure that theological education best serves the changing religious landscape."

- more -

Creamer joined ATS in 2013 as director, accreditation and institutional evaluation and was also named senior editor of the Association's scholarly journal, *Theological Education*, in 2016. She came to ATS after 16 years at Iliff School of Theology in Denver, where she had served as a faculty member, director of the library, and academic dean. The author of *Disability and Christian Theology: Embodied Limits and Constructive Possibilities* (2009) and co-editor of *Women, Faith, and Leadership: New Paradigms* (2012), she has also written numerous articles on disability, theology, pedagogy, and assessment. Her most recent article, titled "Reimagining Assessment in Theological Education (via the Appalachian Trail)," was published in *Theological Education* earlier this year.

Ruiz joined the ATS staff in 2008 as director, accreditation and institutional evaluation and was named senior director of accreditation and institutional evaluation in 2015. Prior to ATS, he served for ten years as a professor of theology and culture and academic dean at New York Theological Seminary in New York City. He had previously taught courses in peace and world order studies, international relations, and politics and culture at International Christian University, Tokyo, Japan. A former recipient of both an ATS Lilly Theological Research Grant and a Sohn Foundation Award, his scholarship has focused on issues of global Christianity. He serves on the editorial committees of *Alternatives: Global, Local, Political*, the *Journal of World Christianity*, and *Silliman Journal*, the advisory board of Global Action to Prevent War in New York, and the board of the Foundation for Theological Education in South East Asia. Most recently, he authored "Of Beltways, Runways, and Sight lines: Perspectives, Challenges, and Futures of ATS Global Awareness and Engagement," which appeared in *Theological Education* earlier this year.

"We are fortunate to have the breadth of talent on our staff to make these new assignments possible, and both Debbie and Lester are the right people to take on these important roles," said ATS Executive Director Frank Yamada. "These appointments will allow us to live more fully into important new directions for ATS, which include the redevelopment of the Standards, the identification of key strategic priorities, and the engagement with global partners in pursuit of our collective missions to improve theological schools on behalf of the constituents they serve."

The Association of Theological Schools in the United States and Canada is a membership organization of more than 270 graduate schools across North America. The Association provides a host of programs, services, research, and other resources to support the work of administrators and faculty at member schools. The Commission on Accrediting of ATS accredits institutions and approves degree programs offered by accredited schools.

###