

Once-in-a-generation motion to occur at ATS Biennial Meeting

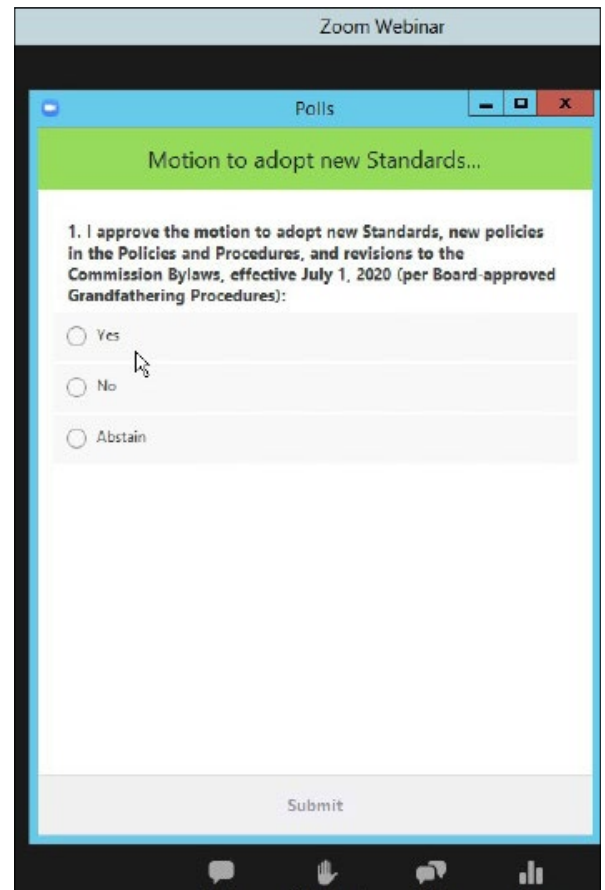
By TOM TANNER

Once a generation, the ATS membership votes on a motion to adopt completely re-developed Standards and Policies. The last time was in June 1996. The next time will be in June 2020. To follow is that motion and a summary of the two-year process that led to it.

MOTION: Based on the work of the Redevelopment Task Force since June 2018 that sought, received, and assimilated extraordinarily broad input from the membership, the Board of Commissioners unanimously recommends to the Commission membership approval of the final version of the following documents during the 24–25 June 2020 Biennial Meeting: new Standards of Accreditation, the policies in new Policies and Procedures, and corollary changes to revised Commission Bylaws—all effective July 1, 2020 (per Board-approved Implementation Procedures).

Summary of process

The motion above is the culmination of a two-year process begun in June 2018 when the membership voted unanimously “to authorize the Board of Commissioners to undertake a comprehensive redevelopment of the *Standards of Accreditation* and the *Policies and Procedures* expeditiously and with a substantial participation process.” The following paragraphs summarize that participation process over the last two years: *the first year of researching and listening* and the *second year of writing and revising*. That process began with the ATS Board of Commissioners appointing a 19-member redevelopment task force to gather membership input and make recommendations to the Board, which, in turn,



would make recommendations to the membership (via the motion above).

First year of researching and listening

During 2018–2019, the task force reviewed the results of the ATS Educational Models and Practices Project begun in 2015. That four-year research project engaged more than 90% of the membership and resulted in hundreds of pages of reports. To supplement those reports, the task force authorized a dozen working groups involving about 100 ATS members to research twelve key redevelopment issues: accreditation processes, Canadian concerns, degree programs, denominational matters, diversity, faculty, formation, global engagement,

governance, institutional structures, libraries and technology, and planning and evaluation. Their research resulted in numerous recommendations that the task force reviewed in the spring of 2019.

Throughout the first year, the task force also engaged more than 600 ATS participants from nearly 200 member schools through 50 focus groups, two surveys, countless emails, and all ATS leadership events. The focus groups involved presidents, deans, faculty, librarians, financial and development officers, student services personnel, field educators, assessment directors, DMin educators, Canadian leaders, denominational leaders, leaders of color, and scores of students at a dozen different ATS schools.

The first year of this process resulted in more than one thousand member comments that were analyzed and coded by two external consultants in late spring 2019. The top three themes emerging from these comments focused on educational quality, accreditation clarity/simplicity, and contextualized flexibility.

Second year of writing and revising

During the summer and fall of 2019, the task force used the membership input from the first year to write multiple internal drafts that were vetted with various constituents. From those internal drafts, the task force developed the first of two public drafts, released by the Board of Commissioners in early December 2019. Those first public drafts garnered some 120 comments, which

informed the second public drafts, released by the Board in mid-February 2020.

In late February and early March, the task force hosted six regional meetings and two webinars to hear membership feedback on the second public drafts. The six meetings in Philadelphia, Toronto, Chicago, Dallas, Los Angeles, and Seattle were attended by about 150 people from nearly 90 ATS schools. The two webinars involved about 200 participants from more than 130 ATS schools. Additional input came from another 150 people through emails, surveys, discussion posts in [Engage ATS](#), and sessions at major ATS events.

In late March and early April 2020, the task force and Board met online several times to review more than 400 comments received on the second public drafts. The [final version](#) that is being recommended unanimously by the Board for membership approval on June 24–25 reflects scores of revisions from those 400 plus member comments. Key revisions are summarized on the first two pages of the [Annotated Version of New Standards of Accreditation](#) and on the first page of the [Annotated Version of New Policies and Procedures](#) (all revisions are shown in red font in the text of those annotated versions). For more information on this process, see the [redevelopment page](#) on the ATS website and the [list of articles](#) published in the Association's newsletter, *Colloquy Online*, since 2018.



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