ATS presidents network and share

insights

By Marissa Dechant

More than 50 presidents gathered in Orlando, Florida, last week to participate in the annual Seminar for New Presidents and the Presidential Leadership Intensive Conference.

Held at the Rosen Shingle Creek Resort, ATS hosted 31 participants for the Seminar for New Presidents and 53 for the Intensive. ATS has offered a variety of leadership development programs for chief executive officers for nearly 40 years.

"The accrued wisdom that gathers at these meetings seeks to be tailored to the specific contexts of theological schools. All of this programming occurs with opportunities to engage one another and network together as peers," said ATS Executive Director Frank Yamada in his welcome to the presidents.

Kerry Alys Robinson, founding executive director and global ambassador of Leadership Roundtable, kicked off the Seminar for New Presidents. She spoke on the president's role in institutional leadership, and how it can impact the fundraising potential for a theological school.





A panel consisting of three chief executive officers offered their insights on both developing a vision for a school and building an effective administrative team. The three panelists were Dave Kersten, dean of North Park Theological Seminary; Leanne Van Dyk, president and professor of theology at Columbia Theological Seminary; and David Vásquez-Levy, president at Pacific School of Religion.

Chris Meinzer, senior director of administration and COO for ATS, gave a presentation on financial realities in theological schools.

"I made contact with one colleague who will be able to help us with our strategic plan," said one attendee when asked how coming to the event could influence participants' work at their institutions. "And I now know what kind of help I can receive from Chris (Meinzer), regarding our data."

The Seminar transitioned into the Intensive with a dinner shared by attendees of both events.

Yamada opened the Intensive with his address. He reflected on his time as a president of McCormick



David P. King, Karen Lake Buttrey Director at the Lake Institute on Faith and Giving, leads a workshop titled Leadership in the Midst of Change: Lessons from Other Diverse Faith-based Organizations.

Theological Seminary, and on the changing landscape of theological education.

Debbie Creamer, senior director of accreditation at ATS, and Tom Tanner, director of accreditation at ATS, presented on the process already under-

way to redevelop the accrediting *Standards* and *Policies* and *Procedures*. They shared that the initial public draft was circulated to the membership December 2.

Two sessions of workshops were offered to participants. Topics included a discussion of the institutional changes brought about by a competency-based theological education model, student debt, organizational leadership in the midst of changing circumstances, and leadership in embedded/affiliated schools.

The final day of the Intensive featured two speakers who presented on themes related to executive leadership in the context of dramatic organizational changes. Sarah Drummond, founding dean at Andover Newton Seminary at Yale Divinity School, presented a talk called "Dynamic

Discernment: Reason,
Emotion, and Power in
Change Leadership." Ann
Garrido, associate professor
of homiletics and formation
director for MAPS-CGS at
Aquinas Institute of Theology, spoke on "Redeeming Conflict," an inevitable
element of times of change
and a topic about which she
has written at length.

A number of attendees positively commented on the effectiveness of Drummond's and Garrido's presentations.



Ann Garrido, of Aquinas Institute of Theology, gives an interactive presentation on conflict in the context of theological education.

Other participants enjoyed the networking opportunities of the gathering, and how the event put their schools into perspective with other member institutions.

"Getting to know others in similar positions is always a help, and the plenary sessions were the most valuable of all the sessions," said one attendee.



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