

Tenure and other faculty facts at ATS member schools



By TOM TANNER

In part 1, data from the most recent ATS Annual Report Forms revealed that the percentage of tenured or tenure-track faculty is about the same (30%) as for all of higher education. Furthermore, it showed increases in the numbers of both full-time and part-time faculty. Part 2 examines from which schools faculty have earned their doctorates and what implications these data may have.



FACULTY DOCTORATES

An interesting statistic among faculty in ATS member schools pertains to where they earned their doctorates. Ten years ago, Auburn Studies published [Signs of the Times: Present and Future Theological Faculty](#), which listed the 25 schools where the majority of faculty had earned their doctorates as of 2001 (see accompanying table). Fifteen years later, data from the 2014–2015 ATS Annual Report Forms show some shifts in the order of the 25 schools but also a remarkable consistency over time in the overall list. (Only two schools from 2001 are not on the 2015 list.)

Among the 3,320 faculty whose doctoral degrees were reported this year, more than 420 different schools are listed. Twenty-five schools (see accompanying table)

account for more than half (51%) of all earned doctorates. The other 395 schools, which account for the remainder, range from Abilene Christian University to Walden University, including a handful of for-profit and online schools. More than 60 are located outside of North America, mostly in Europe. Nearly 60 are state universities. For some divinity schools that are part of universities, member schools did not always distinguish in their reporting between the university and the divinity school. For example, Harvard was listed 114 times, with 32 of those times specifying the divinity school. However, it is not clear if any of the remaining 82 instances meant the divinity school or the university. Universities with embedded or affiliated seminaries are listed with those seminaries on one line if the distinction in the two is not clear from the reported data.

THE 25 SCHOOLS WHERE THE MAJORITY OF FACULTY IN ATS MEMBER SCHOOLS EARNED THEIR DOCTORATES

(2001 and 2015)

2015	2001	Name of School	Number of faculty
1	4	Princeton Theological Seminary	120
2	2	Harvard University (82) and Divinity School (32)	114
3	15	University of Toronto (including TST schools)	108
4	16	Southern Baptist Theological Seminary	103
5	1	University of Chicago (91) and Divinity School (11)	102
6	17	Fuller Theological Seminary	99
7	3	Yale University (92) and Divinity School (3)	95
8	8	Emory University and Candler School of Theology	94
9	9	Roman Schools (Pontifical Gregorian has most with 35)*	85
10	6	Union Theological Seminary (53) and Columbia University (31)	84
11	5	Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary	83
12	11	Vanderbilt University (75) and Divinity School (3)	78
13	7	Duke University and Divinity School	77
14	12	Catholic University of America	68
15	18	Drew University	61
16	20	New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary	60
17	10	Graduate Theological Union	59
18	13	University of Notre Dame	55
19	19	Dallas Theological Seminary	52
20	22	Boston University and School of Theology	50
21	--	Trinity Evangelical Divinity School	48
22	24	Oxford University*	48
23	25	Cambridge University*	37
24	23	Aberdeen University*	36
25	--	University of St. Andrews*	33

NOTE: Two schools on the 2001 list were Claremont (14th) and Garrett-Evangelical (21st) when they were formally affiliated, respectively, with Claremont Graduate University and Northwestern. If those schools were still counted collectively, they would have ranked 18th and 24th respectively on the 2015 list.

*Not an ATS member school

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

In one sense, this article may be as newsworthy as “dog bites man.” What’s new here if virtually the same 25 schools are still producing more than half of all ATS faculty doctorates? Perhaps the point might be more like “the dog that didn’t bark” in the Sherlock Holmes short story. Higher education has changed so much in the last 15 years that it may be worth reflecting on some things that did *not* happen. Why didn’t this list change? Is that consistency due to newer faculty following in the doctoral footsteps of veteran faculty mentors? Or is that consistency simply due to fewer faculty being hired (i.e., most of the same faculty who responded 15 years ago are still teaching today)?

Some other questions to consider

- Will this list look any different 15 years from now?
- Will different ecclesial traditions become more dominant (10 of the 25 on this list now are mainline)?
- Will doctorates from non-US schools become more prevalent (6 of the 25 now are not in the United States)?
- Will university-based doctorates (16 of 25 on the list) continue to dominate, or does the non-university status of two of the top five on the 2015 list (Princeton and Southern) portend a trend?

- Will schools offering online doctorates start to appear?
- Do the current ATS Commission Standards privilege certain kinds of doctoral programs reflected on this list?
- Should those Standards change in any significant way?
- Is this list reflective of your school’s recent faculty hires?
- Does the source of your faculty’s doctorate make a difference?
- And perhaps a more pertinent question in these economically challenging times, to what extent does the financial cost of various doctoral programs (given the wide range of their funding models) impact or limit where students study?



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