

# ATS announces director of administration and CFO hire, search for director of strategic communications

BY *MARISSA DECHANT*

*The Association of Theological Schools (ATS) is pleased to announce a staff hire and the start of a new staff search. These ongoing staff moves strengthen ATS and better position it to fulfill the strategic priorities set by the ATS Board of Directors.*

## **Staff addition**

**Jeff Straits** will join the staff as director of administration and chief financial officer, effective March 1, 2025. In this role, Straits will be responsible for financial and business transactions, overseeing investment strategies, guiding the implementation of insurance and employee benefits, administering human resource policies and procedures, and managing physical facilities. In addition, he will support work in analyzing data collected from the member schools and reviewing financial portions of accrediting work.



Straits is currently the vice president for finance and administration and chief financial officer at Wesley Theological Seminary in Washington, D.C., where he has been working for almost 15 years. He has served the ATS membership on the Board



of Commissioners, where he demonstrated significant gifts in leading the board in financial and organizational matters. He is also on the board of the Educational and Institutional Insurance Administrators. Prior to Wesley, Straits worked for more than 20 years in both nonprofit and for-profit organizations, and he brings a vibrant background in finance, budgeting, internal controls, strategic planning, and leadership. He is a CPA who holds an MBA and a Bachelor of Science degree in economics, business, and finance from Mount St. Mary's University.

"Jeff brings with him a wealth of experience in the finance and business sector," said Frank Yamada, ATS executive director. "He has admirably served an ATS member school and the entire membership through his time on the Board of Commissioners. I could not be more

delighted that Jeff has now committed to continue to serve theological education in this new role.”

The hiring of Straits is part of a long-term internal plan. Chris Meinzer will continue as the ATS senior director and chief operating officer. When Straits arrives, Meinzer and Straits will work together to transition all internal financial, business, investment, human resource policies and procedures, and facility work to Straits. Meinzer will maintain his strategic organizational role, while also further expanding his external work with member schools and beyond. Meinzer’s portfolio has grown expansively since his arrival at ATS in 1999, and this transition allows for a portfolio realignment as he continues his strategic work both internally and externally.

### **Staff search begins**

ATS has also begun its search to fill a new director of strategic communications position. The position will work closely with a variety of internal teams to promote the work being done on behalf of ATS and its member schools within the broad context of graduate theological education. This role—reporting to the senior director and chief operating officer—will create, manage, and implement strategies that help to advance the value proposition of the Association’s work and roles for its members. This will also be done by creating, managing, and maintaining a robust internal communications system, all done with a relational approach and focus both cross-departmentally and within the ATS membership.

ATS seeks a person with demonstrated background and experience in:

- Developing and executing public-facing strategies that enhance the value proposition of the Association’s work and roles for its members
- Overseeing and sustaining a strong internal communications system, prioritizing a relational approach and focus
- Engaging collaboratively across all departments to translate the Association’s value and membership benefits for both existing and potential members
- Supervising a membership engagement team with a focus on growing and expanding current roles to encapsulate the goals of the communications strategic plan
- Implementing brand messaging for multiple audiences, including online forums and multiple public-facing events
- Facilitating engagement by the communications team in strategic events across the organization, with a focus on creating and managing value proposition messaging
- Participating in periodic strategic organizational meetings and teams to integrate communications strategies with core program design

Candidates can access the details of the application process and job description on the [ATS website](#).



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