

ATS announces new hires and staff transitions

By *MARISSA DECHANT*

The Association of Theological Schools (ATS) is pleased to announce several staff additions and transitions. Over the last few years, the ATS Board of Directors has been identifying, iterating, and clarifying the Association's four strategic priorities: (1) Equip leaders for effective change, (2) Explore and encourage innovative financial and organizational models, (3) Enhance adaptive work in schools' educational missions, and (4) Engage the membership in its broad diversity. These staff changes strengthen ATS and better position it to fulfill these priorities.

"In conjunction with the strategic priorities and the direction approved by the ATS Board of Directors, the Association has been intentionally seeking ways to introduce new staff and to reposition current staff to enhance our collective skill set. These current changes are part of our ongoing process to better serve the ATS membership today and into the future," said Chris Meinzer, ATS senior director and COO.



New staff

Deborah Shadd has been hired as the director of leadership development. In this role, she will work to support the development of both individual and institutional capacities at ATS schools through

the design, planning, and implementation of learning



opportunities and resources intended for both current and emerging leaders.

Shadd brings with her a broad range of experience in designing and implementing capacity-building initiatives for diverse users and audiences, having managed training and professional development programs across the globe. She is passionate about creating and supporting educational programs of excellence that are designed and delivered in ways responsive to context-specific needs.

Shadd holds a master's degree from Northwest Baptist Seminary (Trinity Western University) and a PhD from the University of Ottawa. As she begins her new work with ATS in March 2022, Shadd will continue to reside in Kitchener, Ontario.

"Deborah has extensive experience in designing and implementing educational experiences for varied audiences. We are really excited that she will bring her gifts and talents to ATS for the benefit of the membership," said Meinzer.



Spencer Smouse has been hired as manager of information and educational technology. He will assist with the information technology infrastructure workload and will also support the Association’s use of educational technologies. Previously, Smouse

worked as a network administrator at Shiloh Service. He managed small- to medium-sized businesses in the Pittsburgh area, providing server and customer level support that included implementation and management of network security, backup procedures, and best practices of contracted clients.

He earned his associate’s degree in information technology network administration from Pittsburgh Technical College (formerly Pittsburgh Technical Institute) in 2014. Smouse will graduate with a bachelor’s degree in information technology from Franklin University in May 2022.

“We hired Spencer to assist with the IT infrastructure workload. As we have built out the Association and the Commission on Accrediting information technology infrastructure stack, we have continuously added more technology capacity to support our mission, and this requires additional support resources to manage and maintain,” said Chris Olsztyn, director of information technology.

“Spencer will also be supporting the Association’s use of educational technologies (including the Canvas LMS). The need for these technologies has grown substantially over the past few years, both because of the increase in remote gatherings due to the pandemic and more broadly as the Association continues to explore and expand ways to better meet member needs through technologically-enhanced programs and on-demand learning opportunities,” added Debbie Creamer, strategic director of design.



Leah Wright has been hired as accrediting records coordinator. She is responsible for managing the official records of the ATS Commission on Accrediting, processing reports, petitions, and other Commission-required documents, and supporting the work of

the ATS Board of Commissioners and the organization’s accrediting functions.

From 2014 to 2019, Wright served as the coordinator of faculty development and initiatives at ATS, where she was responsible for managing program activities associated with conferences and events for faculty and administrators. In addition, she helped administer research and educational initiatives for the programs and services department.

“ATS is pleased to welcome Leah into the important work of Commission record-keeping in support of theological education,” said Barbara Mutch, senior director of accreditation.

Staff transitions



Joshua Reinders has been named accrediting visits coordinator. He joined ATS in 2015 as administrative assistant for accrediting. Working in support of the ATS Commission on Accrediting and the function of accreditation, he is responsible for providing

administrative and logistical assistance for accreditation visits, including communicating with peer evaluators and member schools; educational workshops, webinars, and other Commission-related events; and Board of Commissioner meetings and other board-related activities.

“Joshua’s new title recognizes the vital role he has played for almost seven years in supporting schools toward a fruitful accreditation process,” said Mutch.



Christopher M. The has been named director of student research and initiative management. He previously served as director of commission information services upon joining the ATS accreditation staff in 2017. In his current role with

ATS programs and services staff, he equips theological schools for the improvement and enhancement of their

educational missions by gathering, analyzing, and disseminating insights from the ATS student questionnaires and student data. He also oversees the virtual infrastructure for ATS grant-funding initiatives and collaborates with coordination personnel for the Pathways for Tomorrow initiative.

“From his work at ATS, we knew that Christopher was gifted in managing complex processes related to accrediting and providing hospitality to schools considering joining ATS. His unique gifts and experiences made him an ideal candidate to support the Pathways for Tomorrow coordination program,” said Jo Ann Deasy, director of institutional initiatives and student research.



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