

ATS announces new program assistant for initiatives, staff transitions

By *MARISSA DECHANT*

The Association of Theological Schools (ATS) is pleased to announce the hire of Samantha Kulikowski as program assistant for initiatives, in addition to several staff transitions.

For the last several 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 ongoing 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

Samantha Kulikowski will join the ATS staff as program assistant for initiatives. In this role, she will work with Jo Ann Deasy, director of institutional initiatives, and Christopher The, director of student research and initiative management, in support of the



Pathways for Tomorrow Coordination Program. She will work with the *Pathways* team to facilitate a community for the grantees focused on innovation, collaboration, and adaptive learning. Kulikowski is joining ATS on a full-time basis as Amanda Leavitt, previous full-time program assistant for initiatives, shifts to part-time support of *Pathways* and other areas of ATS.

In her role, Kulikowski will focus on communication with grantees, event planning, and resource development.

"We are so grateful for the work that Amanda did in this role and look forward to the continued excellence that Samantha will bring to this work," Deasy said. "Samantha brings great administrative experience, technical expertise, and energy to this role that will allow us to continue providing support and resources to our *Pathways for Tomorrow* learning community."

Kulikowski is an experienced administrative professional who has provided project management, events management, and resource creation in a higher education setting. Most recently, she was employed by Carnegie Mellon

University. She has a Bachelor of Arts degree from Seton Hill University. She begins her full-time role September 1.



Staff transitions

Elise Sutter will shift to a newly formed role of special projects coordinator in direct support of the executive functions of ATS. She begins this full-time role September 1. In her new position, Sutter will coordinate

organizational efforts with the ATS Board, membership, and staff.

She will work directly with ATS Executive Director Frank Yamada and Meinzer to coordinate efforts with people, processes, and procedures to ensure the mission, vision, and strategic priorities of ATS are integrated throughout the organization. Sutter will also assist the ATS Board in a strategic planning process and will help to coordinate the ATS/COA Biennial Meeting and other programming throughout the biennium. Finally, she will work with the executive team to incorporate the mission, vision, and strategic priorities of ATS through staff gatherings and human resources processes.

Sutter joined the ATS staff in January 2023 and has been serving as administrative assistant for student data. Sutter's transition was made possible by Mary Boyle's shift to part-time administrative assistant for student data, which occurred in March 2024.

Sutter came to ATS with significant experience in non-profit settings and human resources work.

"This year, Elise was asked to coordinate our internal efforts related to the ATS/COA Biennial Meeting. During the process, she demonstrated her ability to adeptly manage many details and processes while also encouraging staff and executive leadership toward a collective goal. Elise will be great in continuing these types of efforts in her new role," Meinzer said.

Sutter has a Master of Science degree in counseling psychology and a Bachelor of Arts in religious studies and psychology. She previously worked in human resources at a Pittsburgh nonprofit, and in training and recruitment at a local social service agency.



Amanda Leavitt joined the ATS staff as program assistant for initiatives in September 2022. She has played a key administrative role in the service provided to member schools through the *Pathways for Tomorrow* Coordination Program. She has helped the

Pathways team with large events, content creation, and project coordinator care.

Leavitt will remain with ATS serving in a limited part-time capacity in a variety of areas, including some continuation of work with *Pathways*.

"Amanda played a vital role in creating a welcoming atmosphere for *Pathways* grantees through communications and event planning. She cares deeply about the work and embodies the ATS quality of continuous improvement on behalf of our schools," Deasy said.



Marissa Dechant is Communications Coordinator at The Association of Theological Schools in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.