

Early member school enrollment data for fall 2024 shows promising trends

By CHRIS A. MEINZER

As of October 25, 2024, 260 ATS schools have reported enrollment data, representing more than 90 percent of the membership. This article analyzes the 254 schools that reported enrollment in both fall 2023 and fall 2024, which excludes mostly schools that were added to membership during the 2024 ATS/COA Biennial Meeting.



Total enrollment in the same-set reporting schools is reflecting an increase of 1.8 percent from what these same schools reported in fall 2023. Overall, 56 percent of these schools reported year-over-year increases, while 44 percent reported decreases.

When looking at degree categories, some interesting trends are found within these reporting schools. ATS staff will continue to monitor enrollment as the final 20 schools report to determine how these overall trends change, and an updated and more detailed article will follow next month. For the same-set schools reporting data:

- MDiv enrollment continues to decline, reflecting a decrease of 1.6 percent. Of the schools that have reported so far, 45 percent have shown year-over-year increases in MDiv enrollment. The enrollment within the MDiv continues to show steady decline, and it is being experienced broadly across the membership. By ecclesial family, 49 percent of reporting Evangelical schools show increases, 38

percent of Mainline schools show increases, and 44 percent of Catholic/Orthodox schools show increases.

- MA enrollment increased by 1.5 percent. MA enrollment, which has been a significant growth area across ATS schools, has slowed its rate of growth in recent years. Half of schools reporting reflected increases in MA enrollment.
- DMin and other professional doctorate enrollment is essentially flat this year, and this trend will warrant deeper assessment as schools finalize their enrollment reporting. Like the MA, this degree category has been a substantial growth area for ATS schools for more than a decade. Last year, DMin and other professional doctorate enrollment fell by just more than 3 percent. This year, enrollment appears to be flat, so it may be that this growth area is reflecting a new trend. About half of schools reporting reflected increases in this degree category.

Reported To-Date Same Set 254 Schools	Fall 2023	Fall 2024	%Change	%Schools Increased
MDiv	25680	25270	-1.6%	45%
MAAs	27331	27734	1.5%	50%
ThM/STM	1242	1204	-3.1%	51%
DMin & Other Prof Dr	11163	11184	0.2%	48%
PhD/ThD	4124	4299	4.2%	50%
Degree-seeking students	69540	69691	0.2%	
Non-Degrees	4988	6206	24.4%	64%
Total students	74528	75897	1.8%	56%

- PhD/ThD shows an increase of 4.2 percent, and ThM/STM reflects a decline of 3.1 percent.
- Overall, degree-seeking students are essentially flat from fall 2023 to fall 2024. While acknowledging the changes within degree categories, overall, the number of students pursuing degrees has slightly increased.
- Perhaps the most promising enrollment trend is reflected in non-degree students. This has been an emphasis of many ATS schools, including a significant number of schools that received Lilly Endowment Inc. *Pathways for Tomorrow* grants. Of the

schools that have reported so far, enrollment has increased by more than 24 percent, and 64 percent of the schools reported year-over-year increases.

With this new data, there is much to celebrate. It appears that ATS schools will reflect overall increases, and this seems to be a broader trend across all schools, with 56 percent reflecting enrollment increases from fall 2023. Last year, about 45 percent of ATS schools reflected enrollment increases, and this level of increases had been the norm since about 2006. Further analysis will be included in the November issue of *Colloquy Online*.



Chris A. Meinzer is Senior Director and COO at The Association of Theological Schools in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.