

ATS hosts writers' gathering of student personnel administrators

By MARY H. YOUNG

Bringing together nearly 20 experts in the field of student personnel administration, The Association of Theological Schools (ATS) hosted an author's gathering on Monday, September 10, at its office in Pittsburgh. The group (see photo and full list of attendees on page 3) is in the midst of writing a resource book about its area of work.



Following the publishing of books for both ATS seminary presidents and chief academic officers, and recognizing the growing diversification and professionalization of the student personnel administrators group, conversations between ATS and student services personnel at member schools ensued several years ago about the benefit of a publication that would serve in similar ways as had the resources for ATS presidents and deans.

Working behind the scenes to invite, receive, and accept chapter proposals prior to the gathering were two capable editors—Shonda Jones, associate dean of admissions and student services and assistant teaching professor in intercultural theological education at Wake Forest University School of Divinity, and Pamela Lightsey, vice president for academic and student affairs and associate professor of constructive theology at Meadville Lombard Theological School. In the call for proposals, the editors wrote:

In this volume, a cast of student affairs scholars and practitioners will reflect on the changing contexts of the student experience in graduate theological education, the progression of

the role of student affairs professionals, and the frames and theories that guide the practice of student affairs work unique to theological educators. The edited book will bring together in one volume perspectives from experienced administrators on a variety of topics related to student services administrative leadership—from understanding the conceptual models that guide their work and gaining deeper knowledge of institutional contexts, to setting and meeting academic and co-curricular goals.

The editors envision the resource as new and innovative, as it puts the student services professional center stage. Their intent is to publish original and scholarly research, conceptual papers, and reflective essays related to student services in graduate theological education including, but not limited to, recruitment and admission, enrollment management, financial aid and economic challenges, registration and advising, student life, spiritual life and formation, career and vocational services, student and vocational development, international students, trauma and crisis management, and intercultural teaching and learning.

In addition to critical time for writers to get to know one another, the day-long authors' gathering included a project overview by the coeditors and the opportunity for authors to share their visions of how their work fits into the larger project. Writers were organized into peer groupings and allotted time to provide critical and substantive feedback to one another as a way to discern cohesion and parity among their individual chapter contributions in topical areas. The group spent quality time in plenary gatherings discussing the gifts and challenges of what they had heard in their peer groupings. The day also included an afternoon session titled "Read, Set Write!" that provided an opportunity for individual authors to use the feedback from their peers and revise their chapters as necessary for the edited volume. The coeditors were available to writers for counsel and guidance.

Those who attended expressed deep appreciation for the generosity and space provided by the ATS staff in support of the project and have committed to producing a resource that will not only benefit current professionals who serve member schools but also equip new partners in the future who find themselves in the rewarding vocation of student services at theological institutions.

Persons serving in student personnel administrator roles at ATS member schools are encouraged to attend the 2019 Student Personnel Administrators' Conference—themed *New Practices for Changing Times: Retooling for Student and Institutional Success* and scheduled for March 13–15 in Newport Beach, California. The agenda includes engaging plenary sessions, informative state of the profession conversations, sharing of best practices, and opportunities for collegial networking.



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ATS Student Personnel Administrators Then and Now

History

The Student Personnel Administrator's Network (SPAN) leadership education group was officially formed in 2002. In April of that year, 92 services personnel met in Pittsburgh for their second Association-wide conference and took action to form the group that would be modeled after two other ATS organizations (the Development and Institutional Advancement Program [DIAP] and the Chief Academic Officers Society [CAOS]). Having elected a steering committee at that meeting, the group began its work focusing on issues and strategies related to the work of the dean of students, the director of student services, and the admissions officer. The 2002 conference was titled *Wholeness in Theological Education: The Role of Student Services Personnel* and broadly focused on health and pastoral concerns for students as part of the ecology of the seminary context.

Current work

Held every spring, the annual Student Personnel Administrators' Conferences have continued—now with the expansion of administrator roles in ATS member schools—to address the needs of a broad group of professionals vocationally committed to a variety of student services related positions: recruitment officers, admissions directors, financial aid officers, counseling staff, career services staff, housing staff, registrars, and deans of students, among others. These specialists benefit from sharing best practices and peer networking through their participation in ATS events. Along with the annual conferences, webinars, a listserv, and other resources cover topics such as administrative structures in various institutional settings, vocational identity, spiritual formation, seminary community, and position nomenclature. A steering committee works with ATS staff in designing the annual meeting that includes preconference workshops, plenary sessions, state of the profession conversations, and small group sessions exploring topics of relevance to a variety of student services personnel. The last five years of conferences have focused on the following topics:

Year	Topic	Location
2014	Resourcing Students in Theological Education: Strategies, Challenges, and Best Practices	Orlando
2015	New Models for New Times: Managing Educational Policy Change in Student Personnel	San Antonio
2016	Creating Holistic and Seamless Learning Environments in Student Affairs	Phoenix
2017	The Changing Face of our Students	Orlando
2018	ATS at 100: Helping Students and Theological Schools Thrive from Start to Finish	Houston



(Back row) L-R:

Reid A. Kisling, Vice President of Student Development and Chief Information and Effectiveness Officer, Western Seminary; **Graham McKeague**, Associate Dean of Human Services, Cornerstone University; **Vince McGlothlin-Eller**, Connectional Learning Registrar and Support and Special Projects Support Coordinator, Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary; **C. Mark Batten**, Assistant Dean of Admissions and Strategic Communications, Wake Forest University School of Divinity; **Mary H. Young**, Director of Leadership Education, ATS; **Anastasia E. B. Kidd**, Director of Enrollment, Boston University School of Theology; **Shelly E. Hart**, Director of Academic Administration and Registrar, Candler School of Theology of Emory University; **Donna Foley**, Associate Dean of Students, Franciscan School of Theology; **Ashley Van Bemmelen**, Director of Admissions, Grand Rapids Theological Seminary of Cornerstone University, **Adam Poluzzi**, Associate Dean for Enrollment Management, Boston College School of Theology and Ministry; (seated) **Yvette D. Wilson-Barnes**, Associate Dean for Student Affairs, Union Theological Seminary; **Katherine Hande Smith**, Assistant Dean for Admissions, Vocation, and Stewardship, Vanderbilt University Divinity School; **Joanne Solis-Walker**, Former Assistant Dean of Global Theological Education, Wesley Seminary at Indiana Wesleyan University; **Alexandria M. Macias**, Director of Academic Programming, North Park Theological Seminary; **Frank M. Yamada**, Executive Director, ATS; **Amy E. Steele**, Assistant Dean for Student Life, Vanderbilt University Divinity School

(Front row, seated) L-R:

Jo Ann Deasy, Director of Institutional Initiatives and Student Research, ATS; **Pamela Lightsey**, Vice President for Academic and Student Affairs and Associate Professor of Constructive Theology, Meadville Lombard Theological School; **Shonda R. Jones**, Associate Dean of Admissions and Student Services and Assistant Teaching Professor in Intercultural Theological Education, Wake Forest University School of Divinity

Joined by Zoom:

Lillian Hallstrand Lammers, Director of Stewardship and Vocational Planning, Vanderbilt University Divinity School; **Jo Ann Sharkey Reinowski**, Director of Academic Services, George W. Truett Theological Seminary of Baylor University; **Nathan A. Russell**, Former Admissions Associate at Brite Divinity School at Texas Christian University, and Senior Minister of Washington Avenue Christian Church