

Seminary enrollment trends upward: Fuller stops counting psychology students

News in the [May 31, 2005](#) issue

Enrollment in theological schools in North America has continued on a gradual (2 to 3 percent) annual increase over the past five years, according to new data released this spring. But the largest U.S. seminary, California-based Fuller Theological Seminary, reported a head count of 4,128 students for two years in a row.

Fuller's statistical oddity initially puzzled a spokesperson at the Association of Theological Schools (ATS) and Fuller registrar David E. Kiefer, who said the evangelical school's campus in Pasadena and regional extension centers have been showing growth.

After reviewing figures that Fuller submitted last fall, Kiefer said he recalled that the ATS informed Fuller that it could not include 70 students working toward their doctorate in psychology. Kiefer said the figures submitted in previous years had included those students. Nancy Merrill, ATS communications director, confirmed that the psychology doctoral candidates could not be counted.

Thus, the originally submitted total of 4,198 was reduced to 4,128. That's the number of students taking Fuller courses at its main campus or at one of a dozen extension centers in western states or online via computer.

Although the ATS also tabulates other figures, including a lower count for "full-time equivalency students," the "head count" total has been used when comparing the relative size of theological seminaries in North America.

The second-largest U.S. seminary in 2004 was Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas, with 3,005 students, up from 2,887 in the fall 2003. The third- and fourth-place schools are also Southern Baptist seminaries—in New Orleans (2,813) and Louisville, Kentucky (2,258).

Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary in South Hamilton, Massachusetts (2,011), is the fifth-largest. Dallas Theological Seminary edged past Asbury Theological Seminary for the sixth spot in 2004, registering 1,847 for 2004 compared to 1,724 at the seminary in Wilmore, Kentucky.