

Bethel University – College of Adult & Professional Studies (CAPS)

Indebtedness of 2025 Graduates

(Graduated between July, 2024 and June, 2025)

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Of the 123 students that graduated with Baccalaureate degrees from CAPS between July 1, 2024 and June 30, 2025, 74 (60.2%) borrowed student loans while at Bethel. The percentage who borrowed is up from last year, but lower than all pre-pandemic years.

The average debt (of those who borrowed) this past year was \$30,727, down slightly from a record high last year. The median debt was \$25,000. Many of these students also have undergraduate coursework at other institutions – any loans from previous schools are not included in these totals. If all grads (borrowers and non-borrowers) are included, the average debt amassed by the 123 CAPS grads in 2023 was just under \$18,500.

Graduating in:	# of BA Grads:	Percent Borrowing:	Average Debt	Median Debt
2024-25	123	60.2%	\$30,727	\$25,000
2023-24	135	54.8%	\$31,141	\$27,645
2022-23	138	59.4%	\$28,220	\$27,000
2021-22	156	53.8%	\$23,660	\$20,818
2020-21	140	63.6%	\$26,201	\$25,000
2019-20	161	67.7%	\$25,855	\$23,815
2018-19	158	72.2%	\$23,749	\$23,011
2017-18	146	74.7%	\$22,919	\$23,667
2016-17	149	71.1%	\$20,986	\$20,119
2015-16	187	79.7%	\$25,256	\$24,998
2014-15	235	76.6%	\$24,593	\$24,570
2013-14	242	73.1%	\$24,362	\$23,750
2012-13	233	73.0%	\$22,361	\$22,457
2011-12	213	69.5%	\$21,051	\$20,832
2010-11	200	64.0%	\$19,674	\$20,601

Female CAPS students were less likely to borrow (58.8% compared with 65.4% for men) but have higher average debt (\$32,089 compared with \$26,162 for men who borrow). More students of color borrow (74.3% vs. 52.7% for white students) but borrow less (\$27,715 compared with \$30,969 for white students). Debt loads vary by program. Graduates in Accounting had higher cumulative loan amounts in 2024-25.

The “rule-of-thumb” in the student loan industry is that total student borrowing should not exceed 8% - 10% of a borrower’s starting gross salary. Multiply the estimated monthly payment by 120 to see the annual starting salary required for the student loan payment to be within 10% of salary. [For example, \$300 X 120 = \$36,000]. Our average CAPS BA student borrower would need a starting salary of \$42,249 for their student loan payment to be no more than 10% of their salary (presuming they have no other outstanding loans from previous schools). Students whose debt exceeds 10% of their starting salary will need to consolidate loans over a longer repayment period, live more frugally, defer certain plans (home ownership, marriage, etc.) or receive family help in repaying college loans.

There were 30 AA graduates (General Studies) in 2024-25, 3 of whom borrowed while at Bethel. The average loan of AA graduates who borrowed was \$12,325. Seven of 11 certificate graduates borrowed, with an average debt of \$37,793.