

Bethel University – Bethel Seminary

Indebtedness of 2022 Graduates

(Graduated between July, 2021 and June, 2022)

Daniel C. Nelson – November 2, 2022

Of the 116 students that graduated with Masters Degrees from Bethel Seminary between July 1, 2021 and June 30, 2022, 53 (45.7%) borrowed student loans while at Bethel. This is the lowest percentage borrowing on record.

The average debt this past year was \$45,925, back down to levels seen from 2012 to 2018. The median debt was \$40,250, also down substantially from last year. These loans reflect the students' borrowing only at Bethel Seminary.

Graduating in:	# of Masters Grads:	Percent Borrowing:	Average Debt	Median Debt
2021-22	116	45.7%	\$45,925	\$40,250
2020-21	125	52.0%	\$50,375	\$53,144
2019-20	104	61.5%	\$57,092	\$56,003
2018-19	120	56.7%	\$47,168	\$43,132
2017-18	123	59.3%	\$49,199	\$48,193
2016-17	128	57.8%	\$45,376	\$36,800
2015-16	114	57.9%	\$48,692	\$45,530
2014-15	168	72.0%	\$48,257	\$43,000
2013-14	158	60.8%	\$44,780	\$35,740
2012-13	165	63.6%	\$46,027	\$42,542
2011-12	156	63.5%	\$39,483	\$36,900
2010-11	178	57.9%	\$42,508	\$38,467
2009-10	157	58.0%	\$38,247	\$36,447

Female seminary students were more likely to borrow than male students were (47.1%, compared with 43.8% for males), but borrowed less (\$41,518, compared with \$52,641 for males). Students of color were much more likely to borrow as all students (73.3%), and borrowed higher amounts (\$62,724). MDiv students borrow more than students in MA programs, likely due to the longer duration of the program.

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, \$550 X 120 = \$66,000]. Our average Seminary Masters student borrower would need a starting salary of \$63,120 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 9 Doctor of Ministry graduates in 2021-22, of which 5 borrowed during their program (55.6%). Their average debt from this program was \$78,354.