

Bethel University – Bethel Seminary

Indebtedness of 2024 Graduates

(Graduated between July, 2023 and June, 2024)

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Of the 87 students that graduated with Masters Degrees from Bethel Seminary between July 1, 2023 and June 30, 2024, 48 (55.2%) borrowed student loans while at Bethel.

The average debt this past year was \$38,342, the lowest average since 2010. The median debt was \$26,072, the lowest on record. These loans reflect the students' borrowing only at Bethel Seminary. Two things have happened: 1) fewer students are borrowing large amounts (no one borrowed \$100,000, the first time we can report this); and 2) more students are borrowing smaller amounts. These two metrics combine to make a dramatic shift in the average and median debt of those who borrow.

Graduating in:	# of Masters Grads:	Percent Borrowing:	Average Debt	Median Debt
2023-24	87	55.2%	\$38,342	\$26,072
2022-23	86	48.8%	\$46,669	\$45,222
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 (68.6%, compared with 36.1% for males), but borrow less (\$36,624, compared with \$42,967 for males). Students of color were more likely to borrow than were all students (81.0%), and borrowed much higher amounts (\$49,311).

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 \$52,718 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 2023-24, of which 7 borrowed during their program (77.8%). Their average debt from this program was \$56,697. Three of the five Certificate completers borrowed an average of \$13,805.