

What Are Mission Agencies Saying and Doing about

Student Debt?



Darrell Dorr

PIONEERS

"It's a prevalent problem with our candidates We will roll educational debt into the support schedule as long as it doesn't go over the top of the maximum [schedule allowed], and normally no more than \$200 per month."

— Ken Mauger, Director of Training, Pioneers

"There is no question that the amount of indebtedness by those coming out of college or seminary has increased greatly over the years Therefore, we have instituted a new policy whereby we require that they work with us on a budget whereby their school bill can be paid off by the end of their first term of service...."

— Donald Trott, Executive Director of Missionary Mobilization, ABWE

SEND
INTERNATIONAL

"It's something we struggle with on every side. One of our difficulties is wanting to encourage students to get a full-blown Bible college education, but then the cost of that! And

yet, if we encourage them to do all their general education at a community college, they're getting it from a totally non-Biblical worldview, which then has an impact later down the road in their ability to communicate Scripture and faith from

a Biblical worldview.... One goal of our 'Missions Now' program is to get people into ministry in their early 20s because our experience shows us that though all our missionaries learn language well, those who are very young learn idiomatic language far better than those over 30.... The other goal is to reduce student debt. So we are proposing to select a few students who could actually move overseas in ministry, study language, and finish their college degree by distance education."

— Elizabeth Givens, Media Specialist, SEND International

SIM
Serving In Mission

"... Unless someone is going to teach in a Bible college or seminary, we ... don't tend to require them to go through a three-year Bible college or

seminary program, thus inviting more debt. Often we recommend something like CIT (Center for Intercultural Training) in Union Mills, NC. This school packs in a lot of Bible, theology, linguistics, and missions courses into five months, and charges less than most Christian colleges."

— Ed Welch, Appointee Coordinator, SIM



"We're choosing to change our language so that our atmosphere, our tone, every message we send in every possible

way is saying to people with college and seminary debt, 'You're not a problem for us. We

love you and want you, and we're going to figure this out.' ... What I've found that the people we've been dealing with have already figured out that they're 'problem people.' People see themselves as a problem, see their situation as a problem situation, and in many cases have stopped talking to mission agencies because they have to wait 10, 20 years until their debt is paid.... We have created a student loan repayment program that's built in. For each of our missionaries, a small portion of their faith fund goes into the pot. Each person with student loan debt can apply for help with their loans. We pay a portion of that payment, actually half that payment, up to a certain dollar amount, and we begin to make those payments upon departure to the field."

— Scott Olson, Personnel Director, Global Partners (Wesleyan World Missions)

Wycliffe

"We produced a print piece for Urbana that we did with three other agencies, as well as a Website (bibleless.org) that

all four organizations organized together, and this addresses this issue of debt. We are proactively talking about debt and purity issues very early on in the recruitment process, so this is on the radar screen of the young person. I think they're appreciative that we're talking about these hard things right up front."

— Susie Lipps, Director of Next Generation Mobilization, Wycliffe Bible Translators

Darrell Dorr is the Managing Editor of Mission Frontiers.