Breaking away from national trends in student borrowing, the University of Northern Iowa has seen its average student loan indebtedness decrease by 7.6% within the past academic year. The average UNI undergraduate student now graduates with $23,575 in debt, down from $25,523 just one year earlier.

The overall decline in borrowing can be attributed to several primary factors:

- The number of teaching majors taking advantage of the Federal TEACH Grant Program designed for students planning to teach in a high-need field. UNI has actively participated in the Federal TEACH Grant Program since its inception five years ago. At the national level, UNI is currently the number two public university in administering the TEACH Grant. In 2011-12, UNI had 643 TEACH Grant recipients, totaling $2.4 million awarded. The TEACH Grant provides up to $4,000 for a total of $16,000 to an undergraduate.

- Additional loan counseling for students who consider private lending options. In 2007-08, the Office of Student Financial Aid started one-on-one counseling for students seeking private loans. Private loan borrowing has decreased from a total of $15.3 million in 2007-08 to $3 million to 2010-11 (an 80% decrease).

- Financial literacy initiatives, including the Live Like A Student courses. Live Like A Student along with other money management outreach, has sparked an interest among students related to their personal finances. All students in the course are required to review their loan indebtedness and project where their past borrowing may lead them. Live Like A Student also emphasizes the importance of budgeting and having financial goals, living within your means, and understanding how actions today will affect one's financial future.
Satisfactory Academic Progress (A Must Read for All Faculty)

As required by Federal regulations the university has established requirements of Financial Aid Satisfactory Progress (SAP) that all students must meet in order to be eligible for financial aid. The financial aid programs affected include, but are not limited to, all federal, state, and institutional aid including private education loans.

Financial Aid SAP is evaluated yearly at the end of each spring semester for the previous summer, fall, and spring semesters. To maintain eligibility for financial aid, students must meet the following three criteria:

**Minimum GPA:** Undergraduate and 2nd BA students must maintain a minimum 2.0 cumulative GPA for coursework taken at UNI. Graduate students must maintain a minimum 3.0 cumulative GPA.

**Pace of Progression:** Students must complete 67% of all coursework attempted at UNI. Attempted hours are based on enrollment at the end of the first two weeks of class during a semester. Only grades of A, B, C, D, X, Cr, or P are counted as meeting the required hours. Failed classes, withdrawn classes, and incomplete grades do not count as completed credit hours and will negatively affect the SAP calculation.

*Example:* A student has attempted 114 credits at UNI. Out of the 114 credits attempted, he has successfully completed a total of 87 credits (76% of the coursework attempted), thus meeting this standard of academic progress.

**Maximum Time to Complete a Degree:** Students who have completed all course and hour requirements to earn a degree will no longer qualify for financial aid. Students completing a double major or minor in conjunction with their first degree will no longer qualify for financial aid once the requirements for the initial degree are met.

Undergraduate students are also required to complete a degree within 12 full-time equivalent semesters (18 three-quarter time semesters or 24 half-time semesters). Second BA and graduate students are required to complete a degree within 6 full-time equivalent semesters (9 three-quarter time semesters or 12 half-time semesters). Transfer credits are counted toward the maximum timeframe to complete the degree. Students cannot receive financial aid for more than one degree at a time.

The entire SAP policy, including the student appeal process, can be viewed at www.uni.edu/finaid/academic-progress. Please contact Tim Bakula at tim.bakula@uni.edu or 273-2722 with any questions.
Did You Know?

Unofficial Withdrawal (Students Receiving all F’s Are At Risk)

At the end of each semester, the Office of Student Financial Aid reviews the status of students who received all F grades. Course instructors are required to indicate if the “F” was earned or if the student stopped attending classes. If the student stopped attending, the last date of attendance is indicated. If a student stops attending all classes during a semester but fails to officially withdraw, the student will be considered “unofficially withdrawn” for financial aid and is at risk of having all or portions of his/her financial aid returned based on the Federal Return of Title IV Aid withdrawal percentages.

Aid for Repeated Courses is Limited

Federal regulation limits the number of times a student may repeat a course and receive financial aid for that course.

A student may receive aid when repeating a course that was previously failed regardless of the number of times the course was attempted and failed; however, a student may receive aid to repeat a previously passed course only one additional time.

This policy applies whether or not the student received aid for earlier enrollments in this course.

Courses Taken Outside of Degree Requirements Are Not Eligible for Aid

Degree seeking students are not eligible to receive financial aid for any courses not in the student’s degree program. Therefore, graduate students taking undergraduate courses are not eligible for aid for the undergraduate courses. Similarly, undergraduate students taking graduate courses are not eligible for aid for the graduate courses.

Non-Degree/Unclassified Students Are Not Typically Eligible for Aid

Non-degree students are typically not eligible for financial aid. However, financial aid may be awarded to a student whose major department requires preparatory coursework before admitting that student to a degree program. Taking courses to raise his/her GPA/academic performance for admission to a graduate program is not acceptable for financial assistance. The maximum length of time for which a non-degree student can receive financial aid cannot exceed one academic year. Non-degree students (graduate or undergraduate) are only eligible for loans up to the undergraduate loan limits. Any non-degree student wanting aid needs to have an academic advisor complete and submit the “Statement of Required Preparatory Coursework for Non-Degree Students” form to the Office of Student Financial Aid for determination of aid eligibility.
As part of our ongoing effort to educate students about their personal finances, the Office of Student Financial Aid has designed events and activities throughout the month of April in celebration of Financial Literacy Month. These events are open to faculty, staff and students. The headline event during the month is the “Find Your Finances” Scavenger Hunt. This scavenger hunt asks students to complete 12 tasks related to finances such as accessing credit reports, meeting with a financial aid counselor to make a budget, tracking student loan borrowing and many more. A variety of prizes will be made available to top finishers. More information regarding registration can be found at www.uni.edu/finaid. This event is for students only.

A “Food and Finances” Speakers Series will also be offered throughout the month and is open to students, faculty, and staff. These informational sessions will take place from 12:00-12:50 pm on-campus. Specific sessions and dates will be highlighted on Inside UNI.

In an effort to expand the reach of financial literacy programming, the Office of Student Financial Aid has partnered with the Iowa College Aid Commission to offer free, online financial literacy course tutorials entitled “Buttonwood Personal Finance.” Buttonwood is an online financial literacy course designed to give students a better understanding of their personal finances and the student loan process. It will help students make well-informed decisions about their finances and loan management responsibilities. There is also a highly adaptive and interactive life simulation called Buttonwood Life where students strive to create a healthy, smart and well-rounded lifestyle for their virtual self!

Many faculty members have shared this learning opportunity with their students. We invite you to do the same. Students can create their login by visiting: http://buttonwood.everfi.net/uni.login

For more information, please contact Tim Bakula at tim.bakula@uni.edu or 273-2722.
Default Rates Indicate UNI Students Borrow Appropriately

UNI’s two-year default rate decreased from 2.9% to 2.1% compared to the state, national and public four-year rates all increasing. The first three-year default rate indicates UNI maintains default rates well below the state, national and public four-year rates.

Two-Year Default Rate

Three-Year Default Rate
(first year of 3-YR reporting)
Not Too Early to Think About Summer Financial Aid

The summer session is considered the final term of the financial aid award year. Federal aid programs have a maximum amount of aid that can be received in an academic year. For example, a dependent freshman with 0-29 semester hours may borrow only $5,500 in Direct Loans for the entire academic year (12 months—fall, spring and summer). Therefore, summer aid is limited. If students would like an estimate of their summer financial aid, they may contact the Office of Student Financial Aid.

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<tr>
<th>To be Eligible for Financial Aid for Summer a Student Must:</th>
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<tr>
<td>• Submit the 2012-2013 Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) by June 1.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Enroll at least half time during the summer (five credits for undergraduate students, four credits for graduate students). Audited courses, guided independent study and Camp Adventure do not count toward enrollment for financial aid.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Be admitted to a program leading to a degree. Non-degree students are ineligible for financial aid.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Not be on Financial Aid Academic Suspension or Registrar Academic Suspension.</td>
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<td>• Not be in default on any educational loan and not owe any refund on a grant or loan at any institution.</td>
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<th>Different Ways Students Can Finance Summer Courses</th>
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<td>• Increased loan eligibility due to grade level change at the completion of the spring semester</td>
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<td>• Unused funding from fall/spring semesters</td>
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<td>• TEACH grant</td>
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<td>• Employment</td>
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<th>When are Summer Funds Disbursed?</th>
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<td>• Financial aid is credited to students’ accounts the week prior to the beginning of their first summer course. If excess funds remain in their account, a refund will be direct deposited into their designated bank account.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• If a student drops or withdraws from classes after receiving funds or if they receive additional funds that were not reported when they applied, they may be required to repay all or a portion of their funds.</td>
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Summer Consortium (Studying at Another Institution)

Consortium agreements are completed for students who are attending more than one institution part time but need to be considered full time for financial aid or insurance purposes. During any fall or spring semester, students must be enrolled at the University of Northern Iowa for equal or greater credits than they are enrolled at their host institution in order to meet the requirements of the agreement. This requirement is waived during the summer since students may be taking courses at a community college or another institution closer to their hometown where they will be spending their summer. Consortiums during the academic year are limited to ONE throughout a student’s undergraduate career. However, summer consortiums are not subject to this limit. If students are considering enrolling at another institution during fall or spring semester while also attending UNI or enrolling at another institution only for the summer, they should stop in the Office of Student Financial Aid to meet with a Peer Counselor about completing a Consortium Agreement.

Summer Study Abroad

Students who are interested in studying abroad during the summer and who need financial aid should call the Office of Student Financial Aid to set up an appointment with a Financial Aid Counselor. The Study Abroad Office will provide a Program Cost Sheet the student should bring to the meeting. It is also helpful if a student has had a chance to discuss with his or her parents how they plan to fund the Study Abroad experience (e.g. savings, loans, etc.). Students who have not yet borrowed all of their fall/spring student loans will have remaining loan eligibility that can be used during the summer. In addition, there may be some limited grant monies available for summer enrollment. However, most students’ financial aid for summer Study Abroad will consist of additional Parent PLUS eligibility and/or private education loans.

Students must be enrolled at least half time (five hours for undergraduates, four hours for graduates) in order to be eligible for federal loans during the summer. However, there are private education lenders who will make loans to students who are enrolled less than half time. It is especially important for students who are studying abroad to ensure they have set up Direct Deposit for their financial aid refund checks since they may already be abroad when their refund credits to their account. If Direct Deposit is not set up, refund checks will be held at the Cashier’s Office. This may be very inconvenient since the student will not likely be on campus to pick up the check.
Financial Awareness Counseling (FAC) is a new online tool developed by the Department of Education to provide financial literacy to students interested in receiving loans. This is in addition to entrance counseling and is an excellent resource for students. FAC focuses on these five areas of interest:

- Understanding Loans
- Manage Your Spending
- Plan to Repay
- Avoid Default
- Make Finances a Priority
Sources of Aid

- More than 15,000 students applied for financial aid
- $127 million in aid awarded
- 84% of all UNI students receive aid
- Average loan indebtedness upon graduation is $23,575
- 28% of undergraduate students receive Pell grants
- More than 4,335 UNI student employees earned more than $12 million through work study, departmental employment and graduate assistantships
- Work study and departmental student employees worked an average of 9 hours per week, with an average wage of $8.31 per hour, earning an average of $2,335 per year
The new redesigned UNIversity Scholarship Application (USA) is presently being developed by ITS. The USA will be quicker to complete for students and easier to access for staff. For students, the new USA will be streamlined to reduce the number of questions and essays required. For staff, only one transaction will be necessary to access and modify reports, view the USA, print the applications and essays. The redesigned University Scholarship Application is scheduled to “go live” July 1, 2013. Opportunities will be made to view the functionality of the new application prior to July 1, 2013.

Per federal regulations, the institution must take into account all resources available to students. All scholarships, grants, awards (including cash and gift certificates), fellowships, etc., whether federal, state, institutional, foundation or outside funding are considered resources and must be processed through the Office of Student Financial Aid.

If, at any time, a student receives additional resources that were not considered in calculating the initial student’s aid eligibility and these resources combined with the expected financial aid exceeds the student’s need and/or estimated budget, the excess amount is considered an overaward. The institution is liable for any and all overawards. We will make adjustments to a student’s aid package as necessary to avoid overawards. Adjustments can be an increase to the student’s budget and/or an adjustment to the financial aid award. In most cases, loans are the first program to be reduced.