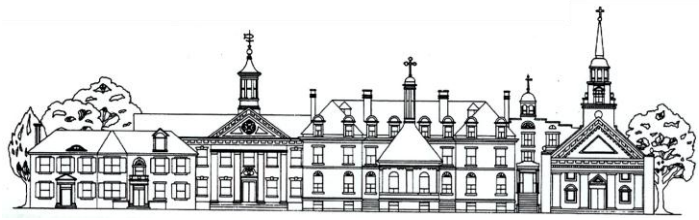

Lutheran Theological Seminary at Gettysburg

Bearing Witness at the Crossroads of History and Hope

Office of Financial Aid *1-800-MLuther, ext. 3008*
skowalski@ltsg.edu

January, 2012

TO: Prospective and Continuing Students

FROM: Susan Kowalski, Financial Aid Director & Admissions Associate

SUBJECT: Applying for Financial Aid

The following has been designed to help you assemble your financial aid application and make your attendance at the Lutheran Theological Seminary at Gettysburg financially possible.

The LTSG In-House Financial Aid Application is required to apply for financial aid for any part of the upcoming school year. Simply go to www.ltsg.edu/students and click on the Financial Aid quick link. There you will be able to print out the application for completion. The In-house application, along with your Free Application for Federal Student Aid, (found at www.fafsa.ed.gov.), and a signed copy of last year's U.S. Internal Revenue Service Tax Return will comprise your financial aid application. Deadline for FULL consideration for LTSG scholarships is **February 15th** for new students and **April 15th** for returning students.

If loans are desired, new students MUST complete a Master Promissory Note and Entrance counseling before the loan process can begin. You will find these online at www.studentloans.gov.

Should you review the handbook and have questions, don't hesitate to contact me. I certainly look forward to discussing your financial concerns at any time they may develop during the year. I want to make this as easy as possible for you as you start, or continue, your education here at Gettysburg thus allowing you to better focus on your education and your call. Please feel free to reach me by phone at (717)338-3008 or by email at skowalski@ltsg.edu.

LUTHERAN THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY AT GETTYSBURG

FINANCIAL AID HANDBOOK

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ATTACHMENTS:

> LTSG In-House Financial Aid Application
> U.S. Department of Education Verification Worksheet

I. INTRODUCTION

The primary objective of the financial aid program of the Lutheran Theological Seminary at Gettysburg (LTSG) is to make a seminary career financially feasible for each returning student and admitted applicant. This is done by providing financial assistance based on demonstrated financial need to matriculated students regardless of race, national or ethnic origin, age, sex, handicap, or denominational affiliation.

The Seminary awards merit scholarships, academic, leadership, and potential leaders to entering students with excellent academic records and promise. Further, the Seminary also awards to active members of an Evangelical Lutheran Church of America (ELCA) congregation or any church with which ELCA has embraced full communion (Reformed Church of America, United Church of Christ, Brethren, Moravian, Presbyterian Church USA, Episcopal Church USA and United Methodist Church). ELCA scholarships will be awarded at a minimum amount of $2,000 per year if they register as full-time students and complete the financial aid application process in a timely manner. Partial scholarships are awarded to part-time students. **ELCA scholarships are combined with academic, leadership , potential leaders, and/or need-based scholarships and will not be listed separately**. The $2,000 (full-time) scholarship should be considered a minimum award for those who apply on time and qualify.

II. PRINCIPLES OF THE STUDENT FINANCIAL AID PROGRAM

A. The total amount of financial aid offered will not exceed the amount of the student's calculated need; student need being defined as the difference between the total costs of attendance while registered at the seminary and the financial resources available to the student.

B. The types, amount and proportion of each form of need-based financial assistance (consisting of scholarships, grants and loans) will be determined by variables such as a student's enrollment status, funds available and calculated need.

C. The student will be expected to provide resources to cover a significant share of expenses by: (a) undertaking remunerative work during the summer and the academic year, (b) applying a portion of any savings or assets as resources each year, (c) pursuing possible sources of support from his/her home congregation, synod or other judicatory and from outside grant/scholarship programs.

D. The family of the student, whether the student is unmarried or married, is asked to make every reasonable effort to assist the student. Assistance is available only to the student. It is not intended to provide any support for other family members.

E. Master of Sacred Theology (STM) students are ineligible for LTSG scholarships unless they attend on a full-time basis (at least 9 credits per semester) to satisfy Lutheran year requirements or are graduates of LTSG.

F. Interns are also ineligible for LTSG scholarships. However, **interns are eligible** for Federal Stafford Loans because they are classified as full-time students.

G. In addition to the need-based financial aid program, LTSG awards a number of academic and leadership scholarships to exemplary prospective students. These awards are based on prior academic and personal records and are administered by the Admissions and Academic Scholarship Committee of the faculty through the Financial Aid Office. Every person accepted as a full-time student into the seminary's first level theological degree program is considered for scholarship. Academic and leadership scholarships are renewed for subsequent years of attendance if recipients maintain satisfactory academic progress; however, recipients are required to file the **"LTSG Application for Financial Aid" and FAFSA** for each academic year.

PLEASE NOTE THE FOLLOWING FOR ALL BUDGETS:

- Actual costs for students will vary depending upon each student's household size, commuting costs, course load, spending patterns, life style, etc.

- The budget includes the estimated cost for the required ELCA Seminary Medical Insurance Plan as well as the estimated cost of expenses subject to deductible and co-payment amounts.

- Annual fees which include the Student Association Dues, Community Life Fee and a Technology Fee are included in tuition costs.

- Seminary housing assignments are conducted through the housing assignment process in mid-April. Housing applications are mailed to all current and admitted students by early March and to other admitted students with the offer of admission. This encourages early application for seminary admission! There is a broad range of campus housing options with an equally broad range of rent rates.

- The estimated expenses for books and supplies represents an average expected for all full-time, first-level theological degree students.

III. THE LTSG FINANCIAL AID PROGRAM

Lutheran Theological Seminary at Gettysburg has a substantial and growing scholarship endowment corpus. This endowment corpus contributes funds for financial aid to qualified students during their seminary careers. Home congregations and synods, dioceses, districts, conferences or other jurisdictions frequently provide assistance as well. There are many components in the building of a seminarian's financial aid package.

A. The Forms

A **complete** and timely application for financial aid for an academic year beginning in the fall includes the following components filed by the dates indicated:

FINANCIAL AID APPLICATION COMPONENTS AND FILING DATES
(LATE APPLICANTS ARE PROCESSED ON A FUNDS AVAILABLE BASIS)

APPLICATION COMPONENT	NEW STUDENTS	RETURNING STUDENTS
1. LTSG In-House Financial Aid Application	February 15	April 15
2. Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA)	February 15	April 15
3. Federal Verification Worksheet	April 15	April 15
4. Photocopy of prior year U.S. tax forms	April 15	April 15

~ IMPORTANT ~
THE FEDERAL SCHOOL CODE FOR LTSG IS:
G03291
(Enter this code number in Step 6 of your FAFSA.)

The FAFSA utilizes historical income and expenses which can be adjusted for the academic year and sets a student's expected family contribution (EFC), an important element in the computation of the applicant's financial need. For early consideration, the FAFSA should be filed by February 15th or earlier. The FAFSA can be completed in one of two ways: **(1) INTERNET FILING** - See the web site of the U.S. Department of Education for details: **www.fafsa.ed.gov.** FAFSA on the Web is fast, easy, secure and more accurate than paper. Request a **PIN** at **www.pin.ed.gov.** This is your electronic signature for FAFSA and Renewal FAFSA on the Web. Use the PIN to access your student aid history online. Also use it to correct your Student Aid Report online. And **(2)** A paper application can be filed. Paper copies of the FAFSA are readily available at high

school guidance offices, college financial aid offices and public libraries and must be sent in the mail by the applicant to the address on the application. Please be careful NOT to use FAFSA.COM as this is a scam company and will charge you to process your FAFSA. Call 1-800-MLUTHER ext. 3008 with any concerns or questions. **There are REAL advantages to filing your FAFSA online.**

B. The Process

Merit-based financial aid awards are made soon after applications are completed. **Late applications are processed on a funds-available basis.** Most of the scholarships are awarded by June 1st.

Typically, 90% or more of LTSG students (excluding interns) receive scholarships administered by the seminary. Aid varies from $100 to full tuition. In special circumstances additional grants may be made.

Ordinarily, academic scholarship awards are announced by February 28th **to those students who have applied and been accepted**. Returning students must have all applications and reporting documents in the financial aid office by April 15 to receive full consideration for assistance. Late applications are processed on a funds-available basis.

IV. SYNOD FINANCIAL SUPPORT

It is ELCA policy to encourage synod support of candidates who have received a positive entrance decision. Normally, synod funds for student aid are sent to the seminary with instructions regarding crediting student accounts. Not all of the ELCA synods provide funds to students and amounts vary considerably. The student should initiate inquiries with the synod before applying to the seminary and attempt to determine the anticipated level of synod aid.

V. CONGREGATION FINANCIAL SUPPORT

According to ELCA candidacy guidelines, ELCA congregations are encouraged to support members who are preparing for ordained, commissioned, or consecrated ministries in the church. This support may cover tuition, fees, room and board, books and other personal/family expenses, or portions thereof. Total costs for a single student are presently estimated around $35,000 per (9 mo.) academic year. The form "Congregational Support", available in the candidate's congregational packet, should be completed by each congregation that has an enrolled candidate at the seminary and sent to the synod office with a copy to the seminary's financial aid office. **Students should not seek congregational support from other than their home congregation.**

Congregations are advised to establish a general seminarian support scholarship. This action can be taken by the congregation, or by the congregation council as elected leaders of the congregation, and should be recorded in the minutes of the given meeting. At the time of disbursement of accumulated funds the scholarship should be designated for the particular seminarian and forwarded to the seminary in the name of the student and the seminary.

VI. FOUNDATION GRANTS

Public foundations and corporations may offer grant/scholarship support for students pursuing theological studies. Books listing these resources are available in college/university libraries, as well as public libraries. Also, the internet is a vast resource for information on financial aid. Here are a few sites you may find helpful: **FastWeb: www.fastweb.com; The Financial Aid Guide: http://www.finaid.org; American Education Services/Pennsylvania Higher Education Assistance Agency (AES/PHEAA): www.aesSuccess.org.** Each foundation or other aid source clearly lists applicable criteria for applicants.

VII. FEDERAL STAFFORD LOANS

Applications for Stafford Loans are initiated by filing the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA). The Seminary does not approve nor apply for such loans, but does certify to the Federal Government the Student eligibility. Transactions are between the student and a participating public lending institution. Procedures for procuring these loans are available by contacting the financial aid office. In addition to the forms listed in III(A) above, the Stafford loan program for graduates, which as of July 1, 2012, only includes unsubsidized loans, requires the borrower to submit the following items:

A. A completed Master Promissory Note (MPN). (Required for first-time borrowers only) File the MPN according to the instructions provided in the packet provided by the financial aid office.

B. Documentation of any untaxed income a student may receive.

C. Entrance Counseling. (Also for first-time borrowers only) Required entrance interviews are must be completed before disbursement of funds.

D. Certification of other sources of support, such as scholarships, loans or synod or congregation support. This must be updated when the amount changes.

E. Exit interview form. Also required by the U.S. Department of Education, exit interviews are conducted for borrowers at the close of their seminary careers.

In addition to the requirements above, other forms of documentation may be required to verify a student's eligibility for federal aid. Aid recipients must also maintain at least half-time student status (6 credits) and maintain satisfactory academic progress, as defined in the Seminary Handbook.

The seminary cautions students about excessive reliance on loans which often must be repaid starting shortly after graduation at a time when other obligations and limited finances may restrict one's ability to make timely loan payments. Loans should be considered after other sources of aid have been explored. Students, however, are responsible for these decisions. It should be noted that deductibility of interest paid on federal student loans has been restored to Internal Revenue Service regulations. (See **XI**

VIII. COMMUNITY WORK

Skilled and unskilled employment is available in greater Adams County through private and public employers. The seminary posts "Help Wanted" ads and may know of special skills in demand. Ultimately, students who seek part-time, off-campus work make their own applications. See "Yellow Pages" or "Blue Pages" in the local telephone book for job service agencies in this county. Fifty-two percent of Adams County, PA, wage earners work outside county limits. Students or spouses seeking off-campus work, therefore, should not eliminate job opportunities outside Gettysburg within reasonable commuting distances.

IX. IMPLICATIONS OF STUDENT FINANCIAL AID ON YOUR U.S. INTERNAL REVENUE SERVICE STATUS

The LTSG financial aid office does not pretend to offer authoritative tax advice to individual students. However, the following information may help students explore IRS policies specifically applicable to the tax implications of financing a seminary career. For an excellent overview of financial aid deductions from income, tax credits and taxability of scholarships, student earnings and other financial aid, see the IRS publication #4, "Student's Guide to Federal Income Tax." This publication and the others referenced below can be downloaded from the IRS web site, **www.irs.ustreas.gov**.

A. Interest paid on federal student loans is a deductible expense. (See brief discussion above in section IX. "FEDERAL STAFFORD LOANS." Also see IRS Publication #970, "Tax Benefits for Higher Education.")

B. You may be entitled to a **tax credit** for a portion of the amount you pay for tuition, fees, books, supplies and equipment through an IRS program entitled, "Lifetime Learning Credit." A tax credit is a dollar-for-dollar reduction of the amount of tax you pay; therefore, this can be an important

cost saving procedure for seminarians. For detailed information and tax filing instructions, see IRS publication #970, "Tax Benefits for Higher Education."

C. If you are a matriculated student working toward a degree, you generally can exclude from your taxable income that part of your aggregate scholarships, grants, stipends and any additional form of gift assistance applied to tuition, fees, books, supplies and equipment. If your total gift assistance exceeds direct educational costs, the excess, usually used for room, board, transportation, personal expenses, etc., may be taxable. See IRS publication #520, "Scholarships and Fellowships," for full details.

X. NOTIFICATION TO STUDENTS

An award letter indicating the preliminary review of each application and the amount of seminary scholarships being reserved to help meet projected need will be sent to each student, with a copy being retained for the student's permanent file. Students may be asked to write acknowledgment letters to individual donors or organizations providing funds. The Office of Advancement oversees this effort.

The award letter will also indicate eligibility for Federal Student loans, you will also receive a Stafford Loan Confirmation Sheet which is required to be returned by you with your signature stating the actual amount you wish to borrow even if no loan is desired. The award letter will include scholarship and loan eligibility for both fall and spring semesters.

XI. CONFIDENTIALITY

Individual student financial information is reviewed only by the seminary's financial aid officers and access to your file is limited to those same individuals. Information will be shared with other seminary administrators only as appropriate to their professional responsibilities and established need to know. Information will not be released to any other source without written authorization from the student.

XII. APPLICATION DEADLINE FOR RETURNING STUDENTS

Financial aid packets are available to returning students in February. Students on internship receive them by U.S Mail. **All reporting documents are due in the financial aid office by April 15. To ensure meeting this preferred filing date, please file the FAFSA by March 15. Late applications are processed on a funds-available basis.**

XIII. STUDENT ACCOUNT PROCEDURES

LTSG scholarships will be credited to student accounts prior to the start of each semester for students who file timely financial aid applications. Financial aid stipends from home congregations and synods do not reach student accounts until checks arrive.

Financial aid credits from whatever source are applied first to satisfy any outstanding charges carried forward from previous periods of enrollment. Then, financial aid credits are applied to any remaining charges for the semester for which the aid is intended. When all charges have been paid and a credit balance exists, students will be issued a refund of their surplus financial aid and deposit it in their own checking and savings accounts for more convenient handling. Refund checks are drawn by the Financial Services office on one day of each week. Therefore, it may take up to a week from the day of the request to actually receive a refund check.

ALL FINANCIAL AID QUESTIONS SHOULD BE FORWARDED TO THE DIRECTOR OF FINANCIAL AID.

sbk 1/2012