



Written by [Jack Kenny](#) on September 4, 2011

College Asks Students Their Sexual Orientation and Gender Identities

The school says the question and the scholarship advance the promotion of diversity at the college. "We took this step in an effort to better serve each of our students as a unique person," Elmhurst President S. Alan Ray said in a press release. "It also allows us to live out our commitments to cultural diversity, social justice, mutual respect among all persons, and the dignity of every individual. These are among the core values of this institution. They provide the foundation for all of our academic, student and community programs."



Answering the question is optional, as it is for questions on the admission form about a student's race, religion, or ethnicity. Students may choose "Yes," "No" or "Prefer not to answer." The answer or non-answer does not affect admission decisions, school officials said, but it's not clear how the question promotes diversity if it does not. Other colleges and universities use different methods in attempting to identify LGBT students, the *Sun-Times* said. Students at Dartmouth College are asked to check boxes of activities that might interest them, including LGBT-oriented activities. Students at the University of Pennsylvania who identify themselves as gay in their application essays may be paired with mentors. But Elmhurst is the first to directly ask the students about their sexual identities and orientations.

"We try really hard to take good care of students, have them graduate and be successful citizens in the world," Dean of Admissions Gary Rold told the *Sun-Times*. "The only way you do that is to meet people where they really are." Elmhurst offers a concentration in Gay, Lesbian and Transgender Studies, [CBS News in Chicago reported](#), and the college, which is affiliated with the United Church of Christ, will begin a series of lectures and discussions this fall on "Christian theology and the LGBT person." Shane Windmeyer, executive director of a national organization called Campus Pride, called it "a pleasant surprise" that Elmhurst has become the first college to "ask an identity question."

"It's important that these youth have a way to express their sexual identity, like their racial identity," Windmeyer said. "Colleges ask those questions so they can give them the resources to get them to be successful."

The idea is relatively new in both secular and religious thought. The American Psychiatric Association characterized homosexuality as an objective disorder until 1973. Both Judaism and Christianity proclaim gender identity to be a gift of God ("Male and female he created them" Genesis 1: 27) and sexual acts between people of the same gender an "abomination." ("Thou shalt not lie with mankind as with womankind; as with womankind because it is an abomination." Leviticus 18:22) In the New Testament, the Epistle to the Romans describes women lusting after women and men after men as debasing of "the natural use into something which is unnatural ... working that which is filthy and receiving into themselves the recompense which was due to their error." (Romans 1:27)



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And if Elmhurst College is truly seeking diversity, it might take into account the fact that the Islamic faith also condemns the kind of sexual relationships the college seeks to welcome and affirm.

"For ye practice your lusts on men in preference to women: ye are indeed a people transgressing beyond bounds." Qur'an 7:80-81

Photo: Old Main Building at Elmhurst College



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