

College adds query on sexual orientation

by [Kevin Eckstrom](#) in the [October 4, 2011](#) issue

An Illinois college affiliated with the United Church of Christ is poised to become the first school in the U.S. to ask prospective students about their sexual orientation. Elmhurst College, located west of Chicago, said an applicant's decision to identify sexual orientation in the 2012-13 applications is entirely optional and is aimed at promoting diversity on campus.

"We ask a lot of question in admissions, so we thought, why not ask about this, too?" dean of admissions Gary Rold told the *Chronicle of Higher Education*. "We are trying to recruit students who are academically qualified and diverse, and we consider this another form of diversity."

The question, located in the same section that asks students about their religious affiliation, asks: "Would you consider yourself to be a member of the LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender) community?" Prospective students have the options of answering yes, no or "prefer not to answer." Applicants who answer yes are eligible for a minority scholarship that covers one-third of tuition.

The *Chronicle* said Elmhurst is the first institution to include sexual orientation on its admissions forms. Elmhurst says "our values and our vision are in line with those of the United Church of Christ," which is one of the nation's most progressive denominations and among the first to allow openly gay clergy and same-sex unions.

Elmhurst College is the alma mater of William R. Johnson, who in 1972 became the first openly gay man ordained as a UCC minister. Theologians Reinhold and Richard

Niebuhr also were graduates of Elmhurst.