



A Community of LGBTQs & Allies  
of Wheaton College, Illinois

## MEDIA RELEASE

# Introducing OneWheaton

WHEATON, Illinois—April 29, 2011— OneWheaton is an alumni group reaching out to the student body to tell them our stories—that there is hope for a life fully lived by embracing both yourself and your neighbor. For LGBTQ and questioning students our lives are witness to the fact that outside the Wheaton bubble things get better. We remember the limited or one-sided debates we heard as students and believe our stories often get lost, marginalized or discredited in Wheaton’s conversations about sexuality. The prevailing ideas about homosexuality in the Evangelical community don’t take into account our stories of joy, faith and wholeness.

Our letter to the students was written with the intent of making our voices audible so that a new conversation could develop. At Wheaton, the word integrity is often used to describe only those who conform to Wheaton’s policies and particular theological stance. As part of the Wheaton community, we believe our integrity calls us to affirm the full humanity and dignity of every human being regardless of their sexuality or gender identity.

Our letter to students speaks to this. From our viewpoint, the message spoken in chapel and communicated Wheaton’s campus that homosexuality is a tragic expression of our sinful nature and thus needs to be “treated” or abstained from is not only ignorant of the nature of love but deeply injuring to those it attempts to love. We do not believe there is anything wrong with being gay. We don’t just believe otherwise, we live happily, and even faithfully, otherwise. We are joining the conversation at Wheaton to show students they have the option to live without shame and self-hatred. Not only are there a multitude of ways to do so (as evidenced by every one of us), they already have friends who love and support them and will walk with them on their unique journey.

We don’t have a political agenda and we are not opposing or engaging the administration through this letter. While many in our group likely hope Wheaton’s policies towards homosexuality will change, policies are not our issue and we did not come together for a political fight. While we might hope Wheaton’s theological position towards homosexuality based on its particular interpretation of Biblical tradition changes, we did not unite for a divisive theological debate. Our desire is to reach out to students and other alumni who may be hurting and show the broader Wheaton community that there are better ways to love.

Our website, **OneWheaton.com**, was created to provide a safe space for students and alumni to speak and be heard. There are students at Wheaton who are closeted and possibly feeling depressed, unlovable, and alienated. There are students whose friends recently came out to them, and who wish to love and accept their friends and want to know how. These students don’t need to be confronted by debates over their right to be who they are or support their friends. They likely do this all day long inside their heads, as many of us did. We hope to provide an online space where students can lovingly explore, question, and be open to who they are and/or who their friends are.

Members of OneWheaton have a vast variety of experiences, backgrounds and journeys to share. Our group spans six decades of Wheaton graduation years and we currently live all over the globe.

### Press Contacts:

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In OneWheaton, some alumni deepened their Christian faith through their journeys, some currently hold other faiths and some are no longer religious. We have LGBTQ alumni who pursued graduate degrees in theology or masters of divinity (and allies who did the same). In our group, there are alumni who were forced to undergo reparative therapy and can speak to the pain and torment it causes, alumni who left Wheaton College prior to graduation because of their sexuality (some because they were asked to leave), alumni who came out while at Wheaton and alumni who came out long after graduation. In our group, we have alumni whose siblings and parents affirmed and loved them—and their sexualities—immediately after coming out, and others who have had longer, more complicated, and distressing journeys. Our hope is that we can connect students who contact us to specific alumni members with whom they will feel most comfortable sharing their thoughts and concerns. The alumni will be available to listen with compassion and contribute their own personal experiences when asked.

OneWheaton is a newly emerging and rapidly growing group and our members have wide-ranging goals, desires, interests and capabilities. Our hope is to become a persistent voice and a sustained presence.