



MEDIA RELEASE

DEAR WHEATON STUDENTS AND SUPPORTERS,

OneWheaton has experienced such positive feedback since the release of our first letter that we would like to thank you all for your support. Interest in our website was so intense that, in the first weekend, our website crashed from an overwhelming number of hits. Despite the site being down for a short time, we received over 16,000 unique visitors during that first weekend. We recently confirmed that we have reached all seven continents, including Antarctica, and still receive hundreds of unique visitors a day. We appreciate all you've done to get our message out. Along with the amazing responses—including over 600 signatories to our initial letter—we have also received many valid questions about our group and its purpose. We would like to take this opportunity to respond to those questions.

OneWheaton is a collective, grass roots community whose goal is to be a resource for the LGBTQ students and allies at Wheaton College and other evangelical schools who may be struggling with the integration of faith, sexual orientation, and gender identity. However, we need to be clear that we are not a church, denomination, or ministry; therefore, we have no need for theological or doctrinal unity. Our unity and common ground is ready-made in our shared experiences as Wheaton alumni, and beyond that, as alumni who are able to embrace and affirm LGBTQ identities and relationships. In our life journeys, some of us came to believe that there is nothing intrinsically wrong with being a Christian and in a same-sex relationship. Others are still wrestling with these issues and are working to synthesize these different aspects of their lives. Others have moved on from beliefs they held in college. Because of this diversity, we feel we are uniquely situated to help students trying to piece together their identities as they enter adulthood.

What underlines OneWheaton's unity is the shared belief that LGBTQ people are not "tragic," nor is their love "misguided" or their relationships "broken." We simply highlight a different viewpoint than what is offered at Wheaton. We've seen the harm caused by the stance of Wheaton and some churches that the only two options when struggling with sexual orientation and gender identity are to "change it" or lead a life of celibacy. We aim to illuminate other options for living healthy, whole and honest lives, full of love and integrity. For LGBTQ students who are struggling with these issues and seek to hear other voices and beliefs before settling on their own, we provide links on our website to different resources that members of our group have found helpful in their process, some from a Christian theological worldview, others not. We offer our own experiences and are willing to speak to students who may feel confused or lost. If a student wishes to speak to a LGBTQ Christian, we have members to whom they can speak. If a student seeks to speak to a member who adheres to another line of thought, they are available to talk to and to listen to the student. In the end, we recognize the difficulty these issues present for thoughtful people of differing viewpoints. We are not here to debate theology. We are here to provide support.

Our community's online presence predated our "coming out" letter. We created a space for LGBTQ alumni to share the stories and experiences that the official school or alumni channels leave out or hide. However, we were motivated to speak up and make ourselves known after a reminder of

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the oft one-sided dialogue that is presented at the college. The “Sexuality and Wholeness” chapel series, by presenting only one view, failed to present others, and OneWheaton believes Wheaton can go further in increasing LGBTQ awareness and dialogue at the college, even if some of the beliefs expressed contradict the school’s. We were urged to action when we learned the school had also invited someone to lecture who spoke on how legalizing same-sex marriages could lead to people abandoning their children, to men having test tube babies for the purpose of molesting them, and to the end of “what was once a great civilization,”¹ but did not allow the voice of an affirming LGBTQ Christian to speak on this issue. There are more options out there than a life of celibacy. Active LGBTQ Christians, who have thoroughly examined scripture, do exist. We want to give a voice to those people.

In saying this, we also recognize that some LGBTQ Christians will choose celibacy. We support this route if the student is wholly informed, called to it by God, and does not feel pressured by others to take this road. We do not stand against those people who choose lifelong celibacy as their personal path of reconciling their faith and sexuality. We are not here to judge, for we have been judged. Again, we echo that we are here to support any and all students, LGBTQ and ally, with resources and various viewpoints as they develop into whole and healthy human beings.

OneWheaton understands that LGBTQ issues are difficult to process at Wheaton College. Many of us were unable to examine our own sexuality in a judgment-free environment while we ourselves were students. We desire this to change for current students and wish to create such an environment, a safe place for them to process these issues and develop into the people they are meant to be. While our purpose is to be a community first and a resource second for Wheaton alumni and students, we appreciate our discussions with those outside the Wheaton community, including students from other evangelical colleges. With your help, we look forward to being a strong and lasting presence in the lives of not only Wheaton students and alumni, but of those around the country. Thank you for your ongoing support of OneWheaton.

Sincerely,
OneWheaton

¹<http://ruthinstitute.libsyn.com/same-sex-marriage-affects-everyone>