**Sexual Orientation/Gender Identity Questions**

**on the College/University Application**

***Desired Outcome:***

Share information with the Intersegmental Committee of the Academic Senates (ICAS) about the Academic Senate for California Community College’s (ASCCC’s) efforts to add questions about sexual orientation and gender identity to the community college application.

***Background:***

In 2010, there was an effort to add sexual orientation and gender identity questions to the Common Application (“Asking More than Male or Female,” 2010), an admissions form used by 414 colleges and universities across the country. The board of the Common Application chose not to move forward with the proposal at the time but called for a re-evaluation of the decision at a future date (“The Same Boxes to Check,” 2011).

At its Spring 2011 Plenary Session, the Academic Senate for California Community Colleges (ASCCC) adopted a resolution urging colleges and districts to modify forms in which demographic information is already collected to allow students to voluntarily report their sexual orientation and gender identity. (See text of Resolution 3.02 below.) In part, the resolution was a response to a California Postsecondary Education Commission (CPEC) report (Angeli, 2009), which noted that little was known about lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgendered (LGBT) students and their higher education experiences. Angeli observed, “Data comes only from optional student surveys. Without consistent longitudinal data, it is impossible to track and assess LGBT student persistence and degree completion” (p. 1). The resolution encourages all community colleges to make the collection of sexual orientation and gender identity data routine and to incorporate it alongside current demographic collection and analysis efforts.

Since the ASCCC’s adoption of Resolution 3.02, Elmhurst College, a private college in Illinois affiliated with the United Church of Christ, has announced plans to ask students about their sexual orientation and gender identity on its 2012-13 undergraduate admissions application (Hoover, 2011; Stoller, 2011). Elmhurst is believed to be the first college in the nation to ask students questions about their sexual orientation and gender identity in the undergraduate admissions application.

Most California community colleges use CCCApply, a web-based application for incoming students. It is a project of the California Community College Chancellor’s Office (CCCCO) operated by a private company. The ASCCC is beginning to communicate with various stakeholders about adding sexual orientation and gender identity questions to CCCApply. At this point in the process, we wanted to inform ICAS of our current work within the system and discuss ways to share ideas.

***Possible issues for ICAS consideration:***

* Adding questions about sexual orientation and gender identity to the application process for one segment of California higher education would likely lead to media attention and questions for the other segments. It may be desirable to begin those discussions in our respective senates and systems in advance.
* Collecting demographic data about sexual orientation and gender identity in California will set a precedent. For that reason, the ASCCC wants to ensure that the questions are carefully written, avoid bias, and provide meaningful data for longitudinal analysis. Any help from colleagues at CSU and UC who study sexuality and gender identity would be welcome collaboration.
* There are probably policies in place across all three systems protecting student privacy with respect to race, ethnicity, and sex, but it may be necessary to review and revise such policies with respect to sexual orientation and gender identity.

**References**

Angeli, M. (2009). Access and Equity for All Students: Meeting the Needs of LGBT Students. (California Postsecondary Education Commission [CPEC] Rep. No. 09-14). Retrieved September 11, 2011, from <http://www.cpec.ca.gov/completereports/2009reports/09-14.pdf>

Asking more than male or female. (2010, August 12). *Inside Higher Ed.* Retrieved September 11, 2011, from http://www.insidehighered.com/news/2010/08/12/questions

Hoover, E. (2011, August 23). Elmhurst College will ask applicants about sexual orientation. *The Chronicle of Higher Education.* Retrieved September 11, 2011, from <http://chronicle.com/blogs/headcount/elmhurst-college-will-ask-applicants-about-sexual-orientation/28553>

Stoller, E. (2011, August 24). Elmhurst College adds sexual orientation and gender identity to admissions process. Inside Higher Ed. Retrieved September 11, 2011, from <http://www.insidehighered.com/blogs/student_affairs_and_technology/elmhurst_college_adds_sexual_orientation_and_gender_identity_to_admissions_process>

The same boxes to check. (2011, January 26). *Inside Higher Ed.* Retrieved September 11, 2011, from <http://www.insidehighered.com/news/2011/01/26/common_application_rejects_new_questions_on_sexual_orientation_and_gender_identity>

**Resolution 03.02 (Spring 2011): *CPEC REPORT, ACCESS AND EQUITY FOR ALL STUDENTS: MEETING THE NEEDS OF LGBT STUDENTS***

Whereas, The Academic Senate for California Community Colleges has long been committed to serving the academic and student service needs of all students to the best of its ability with limited resources;

Whereas, The California Postsecondary Education Commission’s June 2009 report, *Access and Equity for all Students: Meeting the Needs of LGBT Students* (http://www.cpec.ca.gov/completereports/2009reports/09-14.pdf) notes the lack of data regarding lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgendered (LGBT) students and their experiences in California higher education;

Whereas, The California Postsecondary Education Commission’s June 2009 report *Access and Equity for all Students: Meeting the Needs of LGBT Students* recommends that colleges collect data on sexual orientation and gender identity in the same way they currently allow students to voluntarily report data on their race, ethnicity, gender, and disabilities; and

Whereas, The Academic Senate for California Community Colleges recognizes that privacy and the security of an individual student’s information regarding sexual orientation and gender identity is uniquely important for our LGBT students;

Resolved, That the Academic Senate for California Community Colleges support allowing students to voluntarily report their sexual orientation and gender identity on college and district forms where other demographic data are collected; and

Resolved, That the Academic Senate for California Community Colleges be actively involved in helping create processes for collecting demographic data regarding sexual orientation and gender identity that protect the privacy of individual students.

Source: <http://www.asccc.org/resolutions/cpec-report-access-and-equity-all-students-meeting-needs-lgbt-students>