

The College Fix
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California community college offers scholarships to transgender students

A community college in Southern California has announced that it will provide scholarships to either transgender students or students “active in the transgender community.”

The college will not, however, be taking any steps to verify that a scholarship recipient is actually transgender.

The new scholarship at MiraCosta College is “the first in the United States to provide a scholarship for those in the transgender community specifically,” NBC7 San Diego reports. The annual scholarship is worth \$1,000. The funds are paid through donations raised by MiraCosta faculty, staff, students, the local community and members of the college’s Board of Trustees.

MiraCosta’s Gender Sexuality Alliance club led the majority of initial fundraising efforts, with events such as a Queer Cupcake Party and Royal Drag Show.

The Gender Sexuality Alliance club and the club’s Faculty Co-Adviser, Steven Deineh, both state that the college will not be taking any steps to verify the transgender status of scholarship recipients.

“This scholarship is given out to someone who self identifies as transgender or gender nonconforming or as an active ally to this community,” Deineh said in an e-mail to The College Fix. “There will be no verification of gender identity.”

A representative of MiraCosta’s Gender Sexuality Alliance club expanded on the lack of verification process.

“To ‘verify’ someone’s ‘status’ in anyway ... cannot be done, for a variety of reasons,” the representative wrote to The College Fix. “... To ask someone how they identify could unfairly Out them and/or put them in an uncomfortable position and even potentially further victimize or marginalize them. ... So questioning someone absolutely will not be done. It is inappropriate and it broaches confidentiality and privacy issues.”

Students who do not identify as transgender are still eligible to receive the scholarship so long as they are “active in the transgender community.” Deineh explained that meeting the criteria might include undertakings such as “volunteering at their local LGBTQIA community center, working on social justice issues facing the transgender community, attending Gender Sexuality Alliance club meetings, etc.”

The Gender Sexuality Alliance noted that because MiraCosta is a public institution, the scholarship is ultimately non-discriminatory. Therefore, if a “person who is not in the community and/or has no involvement in the community applies to the scholarship and is the sole applicant then they would receive it by default as the most qualified, and only, applicant.”

At the close of the scholarship’s fundraising campaign, volunteers had raised just under \$27,000.