

FLAG holds sexuality forum

LAURA McCANDLISH
Staff Writer

In conjunction with March's Women's Month, F.L.A.G. (Friends of Lesbians and Gays) sponsored a sexuality forum in the Morrison Room of the Union on March 30. Chair of the Women's Issues Committee and F.L.A.G. member, Ann Culp '00 was the coordinator and mediator of the forum. One student afterwards commented, "Ann should be praised for her organizational and mediating skills in the forum."

The evening consisted of a question and answer interactive presentation between the audience and a panel of four students and one faculty member. The students included Eve Corbiere '02, a member of Turner House; Jim Stuntz '00, an English major and poet; Matt Billings '02, the new F.L.A.G. Chair and a hopeful Gay Studies major (if the Center for Interdisciplinary Studies can meet his request.); and a female member of the Class of '02 who wished to remain anonymous. Dr. Troy Williams, a new addition to the German/Russian department, also sat on the panel.

Culp began by requesting that the audience respect the confidentiality of the panel that evening, as they would be revealing personal information. Her first prepared question was "Why are you speaking tonight?" Corbiere answered first: "Because I question my sexuality. A lot of people do, but it is something that doesn't get talked about a lot. Especially here, in this conservative environment." Stuntz then replied, "I am an openly gay student at Davidson, but I haven't been out the whole time I have been here, so this is an issue of my attention." Billings responded, saying he is

"the other openly gay student." He said, "I'm more than a friend (in reference to F.L.A.G.). I'm a really good friend. But I want people to see that I am just a regular Davidson student." Williams described himself as the professor with the big rainbow flag in front of his house.

Culp next asked why most gay students at Davidson are closeted. Stuntz first responded, "It's not an unfriendly atmosphere for gay students, but it's also not a friendly atmosphere. . . It's hard to be open at Davidson, but it is also hard to be closeted." Corbiere added, "People use the word 'gay' to mean a big insult. But when you are gay, you hear it differently and it is harder to come out." Billings also said, "We lack role models at Davidson in faculty members, especially for women. There are similar reasons why both students and faculty are closeted though."

An audience member then questioned the presence of hostility upon coming out. Billings said, "I haven't faced any verbal or physical abuse, but I think there is some fear of association with me." Stuntz hasn't experienced any open hostility, but said, "My experience has been more one of a tactful, polite combination of admiration and respect. . . . People often show a cerebral acceptance of homosexuality without wanting to change their moral code that says homosexuality is wrong." Billings joked, "People believe that I am going to hell, but still they say they respect me."

In response to experiences in the classroom, Williams said, "I have had only positive experiences with my students. . . they have showed mostly homophilic rather than homophobic responses towards me."

The panel also shared their experience with

sexual identity. Billings was semi-openly gay in high school, but he chose to make friendships first and then come out to people at Davidson. His friends and family are very supportive of him, but he hasn't shared the news with his grandparents yet. Billings also said his roommate has been great about the whole thing. "If it comes up with people, I talk about it," he said, "If it doesn't, I don't. I'm not proud to be gay, but it does give me a sense of self-worth to be out at Davidson."

Williams knew he was gay since age nine but didn't come out until he was 21. "When I told my parents," he said, "My dad threw up and my mom made coffee." He also said that while he is gay, that "everything is about context. It's not such a huge part of who I am."

Corbiere first started questioning her sexuality in the fifth grade. "In the gym locker room," she remembers, "One of my friends gave the statistic that someone in the room would turn out to be gay. My first reaction was, 'Oh my God, it's me.'" At this point, she considers her sexuality really flexible.

Stuntz first came out last fall. He had tried to be who he wanted to be for many years, with a string of former girlfriends, but it didn't work. He acknowledges religious problems with being gay. "Whatever you hear in your childhood," he said, "No matter how much you intellectualize it, stays in your mind for a while. My personal beliefs have changed, but eternity is really a formidable barrier."

The panel then commented on how they would like to see Davidson change. Billings would like to see it become "a more sexually relaxed place, with more openly gay students. Lives would be enhanced," he said. Stuntz believed he was making a selfish request when he hoped for "a representative gay population at Davidson." He said, "The community would benefit with heightened awareness, but also because it is kind of

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lonely." Billings also addressed the issue of the future direction of F.L.A.G. "We just have fun," he said, "We would also like to have more women involved, especially lesbians, and maintain a greater visibility on campus." Billings hopes F.L.A.G. will work for partner benefits for faculty; a non-discrimination clause on the Davidson application, and efforts to resolve the college's non-discrimination clause with the Presbyterian Church's stance on homosexuality. He would also like to place F.L.A.G. pamphlets in the admission office to attract more gay students. Stuntz added that more people are attending F.L.A.G. meetings than ever before, which should also attract more interested students to Davidson.

While the panel was still in the midst of heated discussion, Culp was forced to close the forum due to time constraints. Many people stayed and socialized afterwards when refreshments were served.

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Campus Police Blotter

BY ASHLEY KING
News Editor

An employee of the College reported that sometime between 11:30 p.m. on March 26th and 12:41 a.m. on March 27th, an unknown person(s) removed an LCD projector from the College Union. Bearing the name "Sharp," the projector was not secure and was also unattended at the time. Two computer cables used as accessories were taken as well. The estimated value of the projector is \$6,765.

On March 27th, officers Moore and Ramsey were dispatched to Martin Court because of a report of a loud party. On arrival, Sergeant Moore dispersed a party that had gotten out of hand at senior apartment building B. Ramsey also responded to a party in Hart, which soon dispersed.

Sometime between 9:00 a.m. on March 31st

and 2:00 a.m. on April 1st, an unknown person(s) removed a student's unsecured bike from the front bike rack near Akers dorm by unknown means. The missing bike is listed as being a specialized brand, hardrock model, seven-speed mountain bike that is black in color. The bike has u-shaped handlebars. Value of the stolen bike was listed at \$200.

A student reported that sometime between 1:00 p.m. on March 30th and 11:30 a.m. on April 2nd, an unknown person(s) removed her unsecured bike from the front wall of Richardson dormitory. The student further stated that a friend had borrowed the bicycle and had left it against the front wall of Richardson dormitory, and the student failed to go out and secure the bicycle. The bicycle is described as a neon-yellow Raleigh Talon, valued at approximately \$315.

A message from campus safety: Bicycles on Campus

- 1.) Please make sure that you securely lock your bicycle after each use.
- 2.) Do not borrow someone else's bike without asking them beforehand. It is a Code of Responsibility violation to remove someone's property without their permission to do so (this includes "borrowing" another's bike).
- 3.) The town of Davidson maintains an ordinance that forbids bicycles to be ridden on sidewalks within the town-center. Please refrain from using the sidewalks in town, they are for pedestrian foot-traffic only.
- 4.) Any bicycles left around campus this summer (including those locked in the racks) will be removed. Please make alternative arrangements to store your bicycle during the summer months.

The Davidsonian

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