

# DeGioia agrees to Pride demands

by Kate Mays & Sam Sweeney

Georgetown University President John DeGioia committed last night to a fully-funded and fully-staffed resource center for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and questioning students by fall of next year.

DeGioia's appearance at an open forum in the ICC auditorium came after weeks of pressure from Georgetown's LGBTQ community for better support following recent hate crimes.

"How do we respond to legitimate requests for a more supportive environment?" DeGioia said. "We can continue to do this in a somewhat informal manner ... or we can move forward in a more organized way, through more formal and institutional structures and processes. In this case, it is time for the latter."

DeGioia also announced the formation of three working groups comprised of faculty, staff and students to address GU Pride's demands for a reformed incidents of bias and hate reporting system, enhanced LGBTQ-related education and a full-time resource center. He expects the working groups, which will report directly to DeGioia and Provost James O'Donnell, to have actionable suggestions within a month of their first meetings.

GU Pride Co-President Scott Chessare (COL '10) was thrilled by DeGioia's promises.

"We won!" he said. "I don't think

we would have believed less than two months ago that there would be so much institutional change in such a short amount of time."

Throughout his remarks, DeGioia stressed the importance of ad-

remarks. Former GU Pride President Shamisa Zvoma (MSB '08) questioned the effectiveness of working groups.

"I have very little confidence in their ability to get things done," she



LYNN KIRSHBAUM

**A Day for Pride: DeGioia promises a fully funded, staffed LGBTQ resource center.**

ressing LGBTQ issues in the context of Georgetown's Catholic identity.

"At a Catholic and Jesuit university, [we] cannot advocate for policies or practices that are counter to Catholic teaching," he said. "Part of my responsibility as an administrator ... is to ensure that nothing can compromise the integrity of our mission and identity."

A question and answer session followed DeGioia's opening

said, citing the failures of past LGBTQ working groups.

"I have a lot of confidence that in this moment we can do something we haven't done before and that's what I'm counting on," DeGioia responded.

In their questions, several students shared their personal encounters with homophobia at Georgetown. In Arthur Colker's (SFS '11) Chinese class, his professor, to dem-

onstrate correct usage of the Chinese word for "truly strange," pointed to Colker and said, "Arthur has a boyfriend. That's truly strange," according to Colker.

After a pause, DeGioia told Colker, "There are no circumstances under which you should have to experience that."

DeGioia was hesitant to admit the existence of a homophobic culture at Georgetown, calling it "a dimension of this community which doesn't resonate with my experience."

However, he added, "I have seen moments in which the behavior of members of our community can only be described as homophobic."

The evening ended with a question from LGBTQ resources coordinator Bill McCoy about how Georgetown could attract more faculty and staff able to mentor LGBTQ students.

"The notion of same-sex couples living in our residence halls—no," DeGioia said. "I don't see that working out. There are limits to what we can do."

McCoy said afterwards that DeGioia's answer "illuminates a barrier on this campus to engage in these issues ... in the full context of the LGBTQ community."

According to Chessare, GU Pride is pleased with DeGioia's response. "The bottom line is he committed to a resource center," he said. "I think DeGioia really put himself on the line and that's the kind of thing a real ally would do."

## NEWS HIT CMEA's boon

A Georgetown program that provides college preparatory services to low-income middle and high school students in the District will get a large boost due to a recent gift. The Meyers Institute for College Preparation, a program of the Center for Multicultural Equity and Access, will use the additional funds to expand their program by 500 students over the next ten years.

The MICP provides academic, psychosocial and familial support to middle and high school students to help them succeed in both high school and college. The students come primarily from Ward 7, which the MICP's website calls "one of the more severely distressed sections of the city." Ward 7 has a 38 percent high school graduation rate, while 98 percent of former MICP students have a high school diploma.

MICP officials would not comment on the size or origin of the gift until their official announcement on Saturday as part of a ceremony to mark the renaming and expansion of the program.

—Brittany Keates