

# Golden Gater

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## CSU pays big for redemption

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Staff writer

A former SF State employee was awarded more than \$100,000 by a jury that found he was retaliated against after he filed a gender discrimination complaint with the university.

The former male housing director sued California State University and his former supervisor for gender discrimination and retaliation.

The jury did not accept former Manager of Conference Services Jeff Miller's claim that he was discriminated against because of his gender. However, it did agree in its Dec. 20 verdict that CSU and Miller's supervisor, Director of Housing Melissa Purcell, created a hostile work environment after Miller called for an investigation into sexual discrimination and harassment against himself and other men in the housing department.

Miller, who worked in the housing department from 1983 to 1994 and currently serves as associate director of conference services at California State University Northridge, will receive \$112,000 from CSU for emotional distress and damages caused by SF State and Purcell. Next week, a judge will decide whether or not CSU should also pay his attorney's fees, which exceed \$300,000, according to Miller's lawyer, Phil Jaret.

A gender discrimination and harassment complaint was filed by Miller against Purcell in September 1993, outlining a pattern of gender discrimination.

Miller said Purcell consistently promoted women while demoting men, gave more support to female staff and separated men and women in her department. He also accused her of giving preference to lesbians.

"In my opinion, the way that the structure in the housing office runs, lesbian women are considered the best employees," Miller said.

Purcell could not be reached for comment.

An informal investigation was done by the affirmative action office in 1993, but no written report was issued. However, after Miller called for an investigation, he received two letters of reprimand for an argument he had with Purcell and his position was reassigned to a new department -- conference programs and special events.

Director of Conference Programs and Special Events Norma Siani said the program was formulated because the university needed to upgrade its conference services. She claimed Miller maintained his same duties but reported to her instead of Purcell.

But Miller said most of his responsibilities were taken away, including running the Guest Center. He was also working out of a trailer, though Siani said this was only because the Seven Hills Conference Center was being restructured to accommodate the new department.

Donna Zigler, lead case attorney for the CSU office of general counsel, argued in court that it was a coincidence that Miller was transferred and a new department was created after his complaint was filed.

Still, the jury believed that it was not coincidental timing.

Miller said that attempts were made to rectify the situation, but the university would not acknowledge his complaint.

"Years ago they could have settled this very easily with me, but they didn't," Miller said.

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