AAUW Legal Advocacy Fund Plaintiff Awarded $725,000 in Discrimination Suit Settlement With UC-Davis

Sacramento, CA – The American Association University Women Legal Advocacy Fund-supported plaintiff reached a final settlement agreement with the UC Regents on Jan. 19 after a nearly four-year struggle with the school system.

Michael Burch filed suit in 2003 for Title IX violations. The settlement awards him $725,000 for damages and attorney fees. Burch will not be reinstated as head wrestling coach at UC-Davis and is not permitted to pursue employment at any school in the University of California system.

The UC Regents formally approved the settlement on Friday after reaching a tentative agreement in November 2006, just days before Burch’s Dec. 5 trial date.

“AAUW is very pleased with Mike’s settlement,” said AAUW Legal Advocacy Fund Interim Director Lisa Maatz. “Mike stood up against discrimination – even when it cost him his job – and today, justice has been served.”

Burch claims that UC-Davis barred female participation in the wrestling program and terminated his contract after he showed support for the female wrestlers in 2001. Burch’s case is supported by the AAUW Legal Advocacy Fund, the nation's largest legal fund focused solely on sex discrimination in higher education. AAUW also supports the female wrestlers in a separate Title IX suit against the school.

“Mike should be applauded for his courage in standing firm to the very end of this difficult saga,” Maatz said. “It’s regrettable that the university didn’t do right by him – and the female wrestlers – from the very beginning.”

In 2003, Burch sued the Regents of the University of California and four university administrators for retaliation in violation of Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, the law that prohibits sex discrimination in education, and other federal laws. Since 2001, no women have participated in varsity wrestling at UC-Davis, despite the fact that two former UC-Davis female wrestlers won world championship medals.

During his six-year tenure at UC-Davis, Burch was twice named “Men’s Coach of the Year,” led his team to more dual meet victories than any other previous wrestling coach at the school, recorded the first winning season at UCD in at least 25 years, and qualified numerous wrestlers to NCAA championships. In addition, he was a popular lecturer in religious studies and sports and society courses, where he touched on gender equity and Title IX.

Over the years, interest in women’s wrestling has grown tremendously, debuting as an Olympic Sport in 2004.

Burch is now the assistant wrestling coach at Brown University and a religious studies lecturer at Rhode Island College and the Rhode Island School of Design.

Read the full case summary of *Burch, et al. v. Regents of the University of California, et al.*


Interviews with AAUW Legal Advocacy Fund Interim Director Lisa Maatz and Michael Burch are available upon request. Please contact Rebecca Leaf at 202/785-7738 or leafr@aauw.org; or Ashley Carr at 202/785-7745 or carra@aauw.org.

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