

ACCESS VICTORIES

Student wins \$556,000 in access suit ... A disabled U. of California, Berkeley, student has been awarded more than half a million dollars in punitive and emotional damages from a restaurant that failed to provide wheelchair access. Julie Weissman sued H's Lordships Restaurant after she had to be carried down the entrance stairs and into the dining room. Connie Weissman told the jury that the incident made her daughter "embarrassed, upset and fearful." But the key testimony may have come from builder Ron Taylor, who said the restaurant refused two bids for the construction of ramps in 1987. The establishment had only back-door access ramps when Weissman visited. ■ Darlene Ciraulo, *The Daily Californian*, U. of California, Berkeley

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User friendly ... Disabled students at the U. of Minnesota, Minneapolis, have gained access to a resource formerly closed to them with the introduction of specially adapted computers. The equipment, purchased with a grant from IBM, serves both the visually and physically impaired. Voice synthesizers, scanners and a terminal that translates the screen's contents into Braille help the blind, while special keyboards are designed for students who can use only one finger or hand. Special software reduces the number of necessary keystrokes by predicting words from one or two characters. ■ Allison Campbell, *The Minnesota Daily*, U. of Minnesota, Minneapolis

Handicapped

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know what's going on. So I usually call the Union Board and have someone meet me there. They're really good about helping me get into places like that."

Although the Union Board does help, Miller says that is just a temporary solution.

"There has got to be something done," he says. "They're treating the symptoms, but not the disease."

Berry agrees. "Gavin can't even see the movie the Union Board has on Wednesday nights. The screen is set up where you have to be in the seats to see it. Gavin won't let me carry him up the stairs to sit."

Miller does let Berry and his girlfriend, Shani Smith, help him at other times when he is unable to access a building. "If I ever need anything, I have to get Shani to get it or I am at a loss."

Although he says most of the campus roads are fairly accessible, a four-inch curb can pose an obstacle to someone in a wheelchair.

He leans forward, backs toward the curb and lowers his wheelchair to the pavement. He admits he sometimes takes a spill.

At UR, several projects are under way to solve problems like this one. But Facilities Planner Larry Littlefield says renovation is "a continuing effort. It is not something that can magically be remedied overnight."

Policies

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harassment policies recently.

The policies at Emory and Brown prohibit demeaning or abusive actions toward any person or group on the basis of personal characteristics, including race, gender, religion or handicap.

According to Dean of Students David Inman, the issue was in committee at Brown when homophobic and racist graffiti were discovered in a dorm. This incident prompted the university's new president to bypass the committee and immediately establish a policy in consultation with university lawyers.

Emory, Brown and Stanford are private universities, and Inman said since the schools are private associations of

people, the First Amendment does not necessarily apply.

Issues at public schools

As public systems, the California and Wisconsin state universities are required to abide by the Constitution.

According to Patricia Hodulik, an attorney for the Wisconsin system, an amendment to the existing student conduct code was implemented Sept. 1. The policy was preceded by a series of racist events on campus, she said.

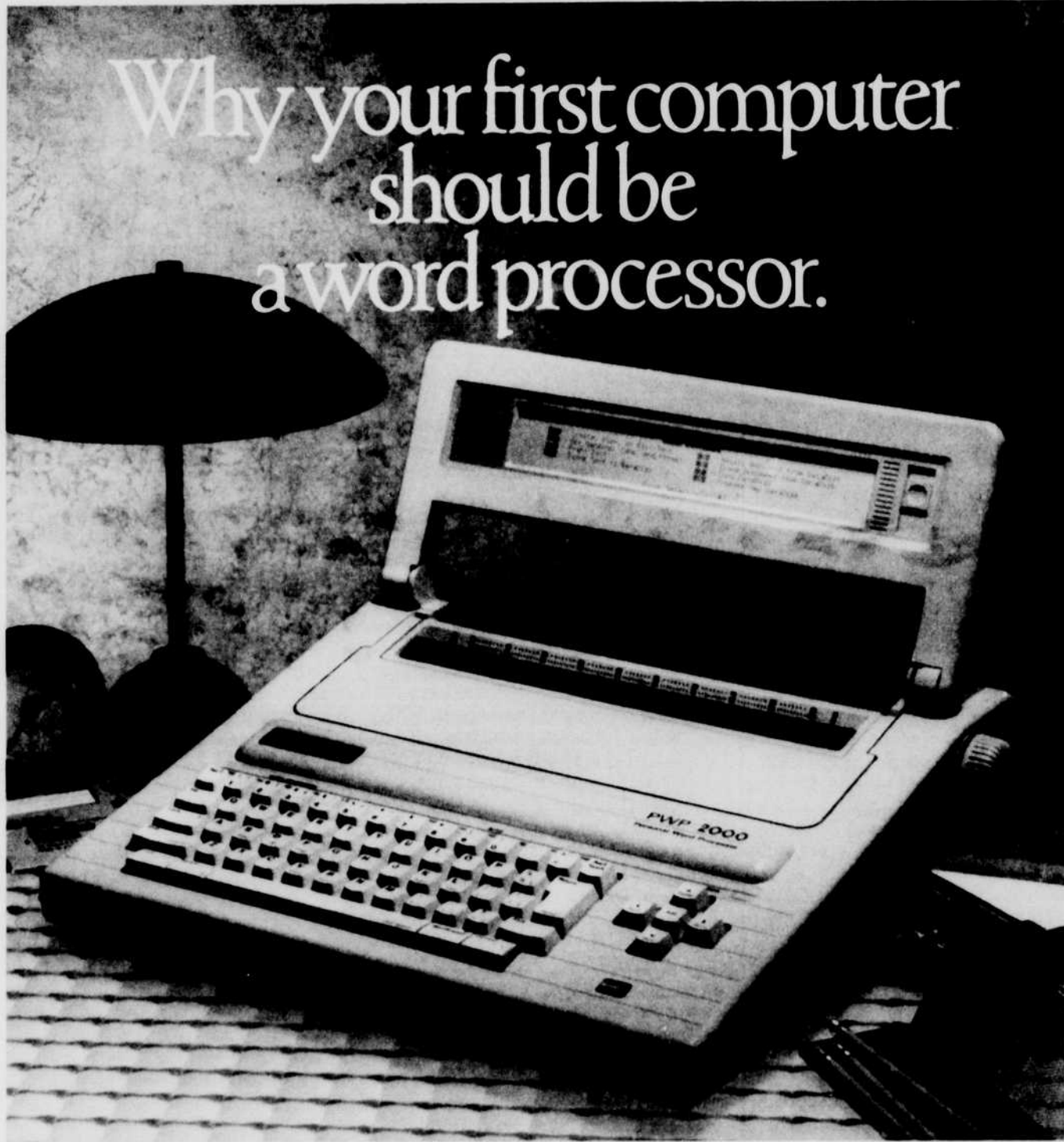
Under the new code, racist and discriminatory comments or behaviors are prohibited, Hodulik said. The injured party must prove "intent to create an intimidating or hostile environment and intent to demean," she said.

The student body has been "relatively supportive," but Hodulik said the Wisconsin ACLU has threatened to sue.

The new policy in the UC system also runs the risk of being challenged in court. However, according to Rick Malaspina, a spokesperson for the system, UC attorneys "are confident they're on firm legal ground." On Sept. 21, UC President David Gardner sent a letter to the chancellors of all nine UC schools amending the system's existing Student Conduct Policy.

In his letter, Gardner said the UC system strives for campuses that "foster the values of mutual respect and tolerance and are free from discrimination."

While the policy is not intended to limit free speech, it recognizes that "words can be used in such a way that they no longer express an idea, but rather are used to injure and intimidate, thus undermining the ability for individuals to participate" in university life, Gardner wrote.



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