

UNIVERSITY

Speaker urges minority participation in math

By Peter Cogswell
Emerald Associate Editor

A noted University of California, Berkeley mathematician who has helped to change the way minority students are educated in mathematics at Berkeley and across the nation is on campus to discuss ways to improve the University's math and science programs.

Uri Treisman, director of the Charles A. Dana Center for Mathematics and Science Education at Berkeley, spoke Thursday on increasing minority participation in mathematics.

"The population is changing," Treisman said. "Larger and larger popu-

lations are minorities and most of these populations have had nothing to do with math."

In the mid 1970s the failure rate of blacks students at Berkeley in math classes was 60 percent, Treisman said. Through Treisman's work, a decade later it was 4 percent.

Treisman brought down the staggering failure rate by making math appealing to minority students.

"The (math) courses had no life," he said. "Math has changed the way we look at the universe, but its not important if its looked at out of context."

"A partial solution is to make freshmen instruction particularly rich. We

have to look at how instruction has to be to draw students into an academic area."

It is important to make a course impossible for students not to love and to make it so focused that students base their lives around it, he said.

Treisman became interested in his field when the 60 percent failure rate statistic was first brought to his attention.

"I became interested in why people learn and decided to take a look at who uses calculus," he said.

In order to receive funding for his research, Treisman had to first find a hypothesis and asked members of the fac-

ulty and staff for their ideas on why minorities made poor math students.

Faculty responses ranged from a motivation gap between minorities to family support problems and income problems.

Treisman said that at first he was naive enough to believe that one of these could actually have been one of the causes for poor minority showings in mathematics, but his research did not bear this to be true.

Treisman will speak again today at 3:30 on demographic changes and implications for curricular change in room 100 of Willamette Hall. The speech is free and open to the public.

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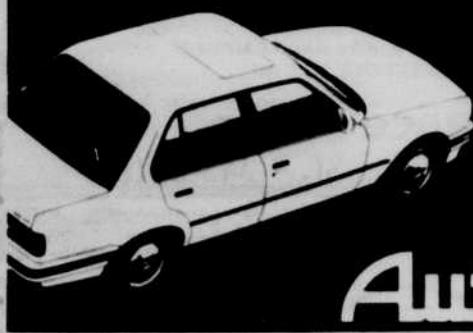
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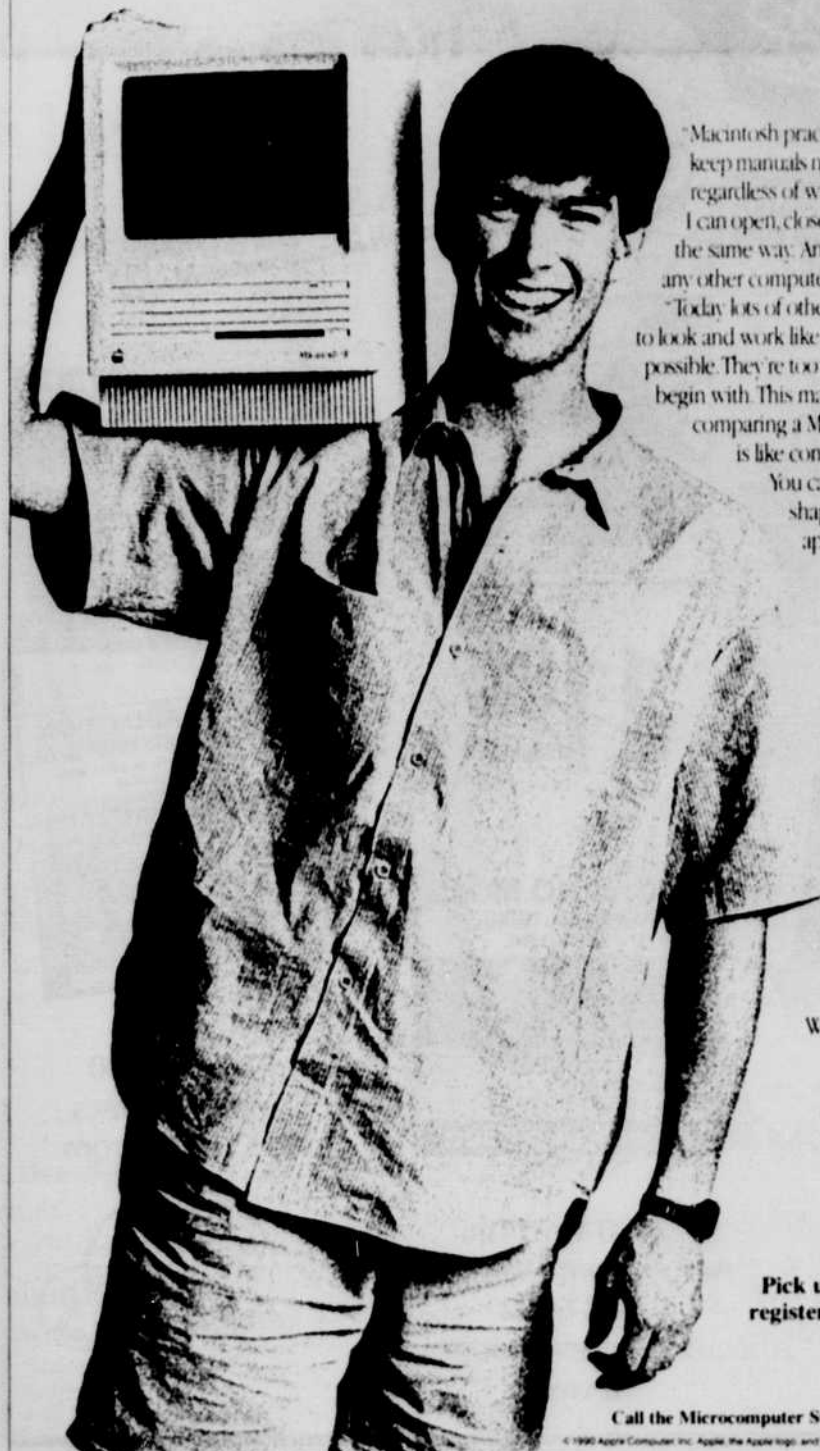
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