

# Former Duluth, Minn. hockey coach awarded \$3.7 million for bias

A federal jury hearing a discrimination lawsuit filed against the University of Minnesota Duluth has awarded \$3.7 million to Shannon Miller, the university's former women's hockey coach.

In December 2014, UMD Chancellor Lendley Black and Athletic Director Josh Berlo called Miller into a meeting and delivered an ultimatum: either retire or resign. When Miller refused to do either, they elected not to renew her contract.

Miller is one of the most successful coaches in NCAA women's hockey history. She won five national championships during her tenure at the University of Minnesota Duluth and had taken her team to the "Frozen Four" NCAA tournament quarter finals 11 times.

The university offered various reasons why Miller's contract wasn't renewed, including the team's relatively poor performance in recent years. But university officials also said it was purely a monetary decision. (Miller countered that the coach of the men's team was paid \$93,241 more than she earned.)

Miller alleged a more nefarious motive: Bias against women in general and her in particular, as an openly gay woman. The jury agreed.

**Note:** Employers that terminate an employee or refuse to renew a contract must decide on one reason or set of reasons and not deviate. When juries must sort through changing stories, they quickly conclude the employer is lying.