

Chancellor appointed at UCSC

UCSC - Faculty
Veteran professor
'obvious choice,'
former student says

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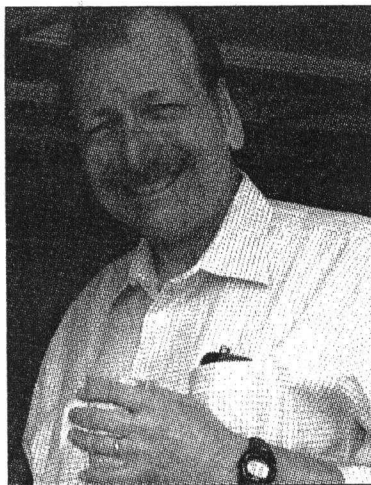
George R. Blumenthal was named the new chancellor at UC Santa Cruz, a post for which he was unanimously approved Wednesday by the UC Board of Regents.

The selection of Blumenthal, 61, a highly regarded astrophysicist, follows a five-month national search that attracted 550 candidates.

Blumenthal, a veteran of 35 years at the campus, has been serving as acting chancellor for the past 14 months, following Denice Denton who committed suicide in June 2006.

"I will proudly work with the campus community, our accomplished alumni, and the many communities we serve to continue

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Blumenthal

UCSC

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UCSC's upward trajectory," Blumenthal said Wednesday in a statement.

Blumenthal took over the acting position at a particularly difficult moment.

The campus was in shock from Denton's death, administrators were grappling with a series of unruly student protests and the university, with an enrollment of about 15,000, was planning to grow, a touchy subject in relations with the city of Santa Cruz. UCSC's growth plan prompted nearly a dozen lawsuits from the city, county and neighborhood groups.

Yet, Blumenthal showed an affability and a willingness to listen that made him popular with students, faculty and community leaders alike.

"He's an obvious choice, because he's generally considered a good guy and has good experience," said one of Blumenthal's former graduate students, Chanda Prescod-Weinstein, who was also a campus activist.

Prescod-Weinstein said she hopes the new chancellor will go to bat for such perennial university concerns as a campus diversity and labor issues. Blumenthal has already established a reputation for championing these issues, and he sits on a system-wide committee dedicated to diversity, for which he chairs a subgroup focused on graduate students and postdoctoral scholars.

Earlier this year, Blumenthal helped secure a mutually agreeable contract for the university's lowest paid workers — including janitors and cafeteria staff — many of whom live in South County.

Faculty members had been concerned that UC headquarters in Oakland would follow recent tradition and appoint an outsider with no knowledge or special appreciation of the campus, or the quirky, resistant-to-change community. They lobbied UC President Robert Dynes to choose Blumenthal during a campus visit in April, and again in a signed letter that included an endorsement

from Santa Cruz's mayor and several council members.

On Wednesday, Dynes hailed the new chancellor's leadership style and prowess to make UCSC into a national powerhouse for science and engineering research.

"In naming George Blumenthal to this important position, we are choosing a person who has contributed significantly to UCSC's richly deserved reputation for producing world-class research and student-focused instruction," Dynes said in a statement.

"George Blumenthal's thoughtful, collegial and constructive leadership style will solidify UCSC's stature as one of the premier research universities in the nation," Dynes said.

While serving as the interim leader, Blumenthal presided over the campus endowment as it exceeded \$100 million for the first time, according to a campus press release.

Blumenthal will receive \$310,000 per year in his new position.

Trained as a theoretical astrophysicist, Blumenthal investigates the origin of structure in the universe, such as galaxies and clusters of galaxies. He will continue to hold his faculty position in the Astronomy and Astrophysics Department, which is considered one of the strongest programs in the country.

Cabrillo College President Brian King welcomed the news of Blumenthal's appointment.

"I couldn't be more delighted that the word 'interim' has been removed from George's title," said King. "George is a tremendous leader who knows our community."

In her 16-month tenure at UCSC, Denton drew fire from many directions.

Along with other UC leaders around the state, she was a frequent target of broader criticism involving compensation practices by the University of California system.

She was personally criticized after \$600,000 in renovations were made to her university home — including a \$30,000 enclosure for her two dogs — though many of the improvements were not at her request.