

# UCSC Plans to Grow from 15,000 to 21,000 Students, Adding Another 1,500 in Faculty and Staff

UCSC Growth Plan Presents Challenges in Housing, Transportation Subsidies, Congestion and Water Demand

UCSC - Growth  
by Michael Thomas

Is there room in Santa Cruz County for thousands more UCSC students, along with the faculty and staff to support them? According to University plans, major expansion in the next 15 years could be adopted with a minimum number of corresponding measures to offset impacts from growth on the surrounding community. Issues such as water conservation could be studied later, after the planned growth is well underway.

To meet the increasing demand for higher education in California, the University plans to add as many as 6,600 new students to a current population of 14,400. An additional 370 faculty and 1,250 staff members would come to the campus.

The University's new Long Range Development Plan was prepared with participation from the community and released in January of this year. Now a draft Environmental Impact Report has been completed and the public has until Dec. 19 to submit formal comments on the growth plan's impacts.

The University's planning consultants will then have to respond to those comments in the EIR's final draft. But unlike most development projects, which have to get their EIRs certified by governmental agencies, the UC system's Board of Regents will have the final say on whether to approve the EIR and a growth plan that will likely double the physical infrastructure of the campus. The campus is not subject to local zon-



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ing laws and planning review, although a court challenge could be filed.

Supervisor Mardi Wormhoudt, whose District covers west Santa Cruz, is frustrated by the University's exemption. Under her guidance last year, the Board advocated unsuccessfully for changes to the law that would have allowed local jurisdictions some oversight. Specifically, Santa Cruz County officials asked State legislators to make UC campuses subject to local land

use policy if they grew to more than 5 percent of the County's population.

"The University brought the full force of University Hall down on us, down on the Legislature to resist that," Wormhoudt said.

Supervisors then asked the State to halt growth until the University mitigated the impact of past growth. Now Wormhoudt says the LRDP presents a critical threat "in terms of preserving the culture of this community, in terms of who we are and how we live."

Some residents agree. "What they are planning up there is going to be disastrous for Santa Cruz," said Don Stevens of the Coalition for Limiting University Expansion (CLUE).

## Westside Neighbors Distressed by Expansion Plans

The group CLUE was pioneered by residents of Santa Cruz's Westside. Many are already frustrated by the University's impact on neighborhoods.

"It will mean gridlock and using up most of our water resources [available for growth] and turning more of our neighborhoods into dormitories," Stevens added.

Supporters of the University's plans say the community impacts are overshadowed by the University's contributions to Santa Cruz County. Indeed, it is the County's single largest employer.

"The campus is a tremendous asset to the County's

continued on page 14



economic well-being," said UCSC spokesman Jim Burns. "On a yearly basis, UCSC is responsible for approximately a billion dollars of economic activity in Santa Cruz County."

### By 2020, Campus Will Be Vastly Expanded

For anyone taking a walk around the UCSC campus today, the environment already feels like a mix between a university and a construction site. Amid the trees, new housing and academic buildings are taking shape, and students pedaling bicycles or walking to class share the roads with a regular parade of bulldozers, graders and backhoes.

Some facilities show a clear need for maintenance or replacement. A peek inside family student housing near the campus' West Entrance shows buildings that should, and will be, replaced under the proposed Development Plan.

But the LRDP calls for much more. New colleges are in the works, with four large areas of housing arrayed along a new northern loop road. That alone will take up 242 acres of currently undeveloped forests. Within the loop road, another 132 acres would be developed with three new academic core areas.

The footprint of campus buildings would nearly double. The campus has 4.8 million square feet of indoor space and would add another 4 million square feet.

### Half of Students Would Live Off Campus

The University has added housing for 2,153 students over the past decade. It promised to house 70 percent of its students but achieved only 44 percent. Under the current plan, expectations would be reduced, and the campus would attempt to provide housing for only half of its students. The rest must sink or swim in the greater community's tight housing market. That's 10,000 students looking for housing each year — about the resident population of Capitola.

County Supervisor Jan Beautz said the impact is felt countywide, including in Mid-County neighborhoods where single family homes are consumed by groups of UCSC students putting a strain on already stressed roads, parking and infrastructure.

"If a number of students get together, they can easily out-price a family for a house," she said. "And it creates the whole neighborhood issues of too many cars."

The EIR, a document which is normally expected to provide specific, well-developed mitigations for such impacts, merely expresses a hope that the private sector will develop the necessary housing and expresses a willingness to "work with the City and County to coordinate overall housing efforts."

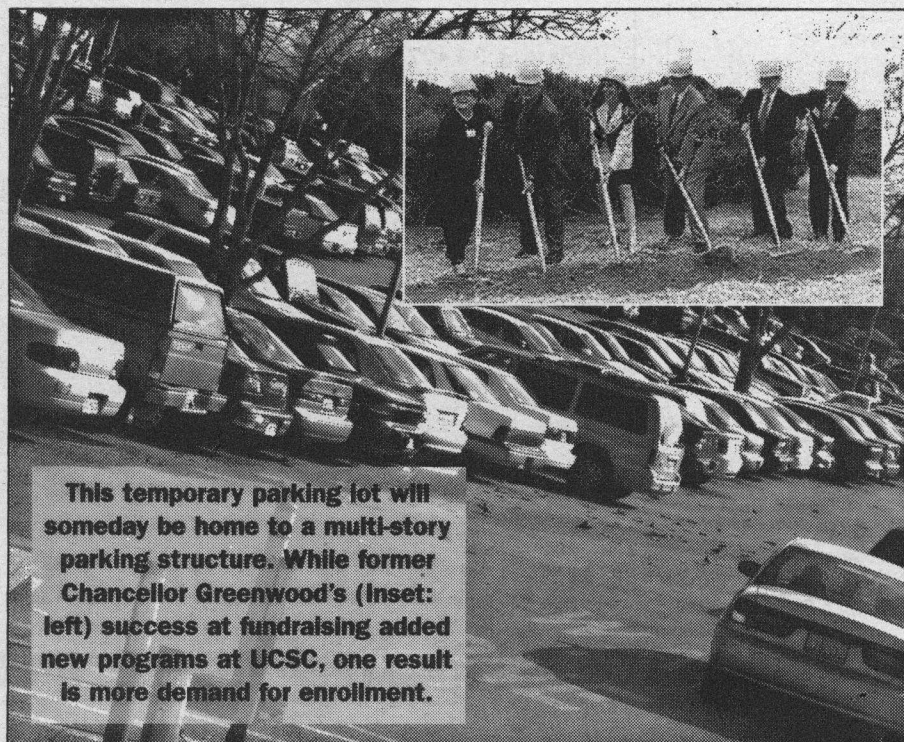
Burns said "the campus is engaged with the City to explore new joint-housing opportunities."

But Santa Cruz City Mayor Mike Rotkin, who is also a lecturer at the University, says that such conversations are a far cry from well-planned projects to help

alleviate the strain on local housing.

"There is no way that that number of people can be accommodated in our City," Rotkin said. "The destruction of family life in our town will be exacerbated."

According to the EIR, the City of Santa Cruz's projected current population is 56,953 and will increase to 59,924 by 2020. This means that, relative to the City's projected population, the number of off-campus students and faculty added to the community will exceed population growth from all other sources, either pushing out other demographics or preventing a broader range of age groups from moving to the



This temporary parking lot will someday be home to a multi-story parking structure. While former Chancellor Greenwood's (Inset: left) success at fundraising added new programs at UCSC, one result is more demand for enrollment.

City.

Rotkin believes the EIR is insufficient.

"Usually [developers] attempt to very clearly identify potential impacts to development and then offer very specific mitigations," he said. "The mitigations that are identified are vague and floating. I don't think that constitutes an EIR."

### Water Supply Critical — Growth Predicted to Make Existing Problem Worse

The University claims past success at controlling water use on the campus. Between 1986 and 2003, enrollment increased by 60 percent and water usage only jumped by 19 percent. Some of the EIR's most specific mitigations are related to water consumption, such as installing water-efficient washing machines and landscaping. When water use reaches 250 million gallons per year (GPY), the campus plans to start replacing old fixtures and appliances.

But other mitigations of water consumption take a "first the growth, and then the study" approach, as Rotkin describes it. For example, the campus promises to start a study of reclaimed water when consumption reaches 300 million GPY — implementing a project when consumption reaches 350 million GPY.

In the meantime, the campus will have used up 58 percent of the remaining water production capacity in the City of Santa Cruz. Stevens says that could make taps run dry. "In 10 to 15 years, there won't be any water available. If you have a business or you want the community to grow in a certain way, you won't

have that ability," he said.

The City provides water to the campus under the terms of a 1962 agreement that also requires the City to provide services such as police and fire protection. Today, the University covers the latter two resources on its own. For water, it has a supply well in Jordan Gulch, but no system for drinking water production, so the City remains the primary provider.

The City of Santa Cruz, which takes most of its water from creeks and rivers, has struggled to meet growing demand in drought years. On Nov. 8, the City Council approved a plan that includes a \$40 million desalination plant. The plant would only be used for drought years, but critics say the costly plan demonstrates the lengths to which the City already has to go to provide water.

### What Will the City Do?

According to Rotkin, some of the proposed new development in UCSC's upper forests is actually beyond City boundaries. In fact, the campus' Crown Merrill Apartments are already outside City limits, and the City provides them with water.

"We have no obligation to provide that water," Rotkin said.

He says the University will need to win support from the Council to expand the City's boundaries to include new development if City water is to be used there. "It's one of the points of leverage that we have," he said.

But UCSC's Burns, after having time to research the issue, appeared to disagree. "Campus infrastructure already exists and can be extended outside of City limits."

Calls to campus planners and members of the LRDP's executive committee went unanswered or were directed to the University's public relations office. There, spokespersons referred questions to the EIR's 900-page report or cited sections of the EIR's executive summary.

During the development of the growth plan, there were numerous opportunities for community input. But critics such as Stevens felt their objections did little to change the course of planning.

"There was a ton of public comment, but none of it was included [in the current draft LRDP]. It was a charade," he said.

Among the key concerns of the University's neighbors were traffic impacts to the residential streets by which the campus is accessed.

### Bikes, Buses, and Lots of New Parking

The EIR calls for increased efforts to encourage the use of alternate transportation. And even today, many say that the campus community deserves recognition for its commitment to finding sustainable solutions.

But many still drive to the campus, park in a "collector lot" and catch rides on frequent shuttles around the campus. Under the LRDP, a large parking garage would be built on one collector lot, accounting for much of the 5,000 new parking spaces expected. A new campus entrance would be built from Empire Grade to

continued on page 15



service the northern campus additions.

"You simply cannot channel that much additional traffic up through Westside," Wormhoudt said. She said the strain extends beyond Bay Avenue. "Bay [Avenue] is simply the end of the journey for most people."

Rotkin thinks the transportation program laid out so far "is a stupid plan for the University."

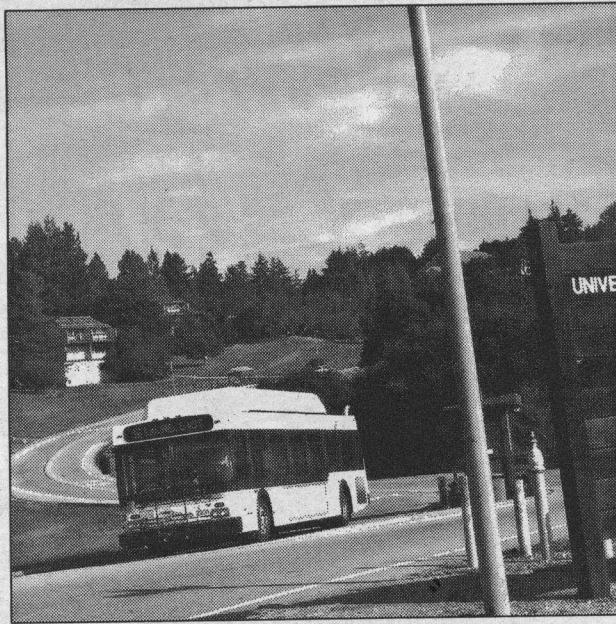
For those who don't drive, the County's Metro bus system will provide an increasing number of rides. Already, UCSC students and staff comprise one-third of the users of the system, which is heavily subsidized by Federal grants and a local sales tax measure passed in the '80s.

The University collects a transportation fee from students and then pays Metro about 94 cents every time a student rides the bus. Fares for regular passengers have recently been raised to \$1.50. Even for riders paying \$1.50 in fares, the District must contribute more to make up for the difference between the actual cost of the ride and the reduced fare.

Metro Director Les White said the bus system is prepared to handle the increased demand for rides. He believes that UCSC fairly compensates Metro.

"Financially, [the expanded demand] would cost something, but it would not be overwhelming," White said.

However he said there are additional measures that need to be taken, such as a dedicated lane for buses on Bay Avenue, new turnouts and equipment that allows drivers to remotely change a traffic signal



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to green to pass rapidly.

Rotkin thinks the University might need to contribute millions for such projects to occur. However, White said the University's plan calls for student transportation fees to provide all the cash necessary for such projects.

"If [the University] is going to expand its capacity, is it appropriate for them to take the mitigation measure and put it solely on the back of students and their

fees?" White asked. "The University contributes nothing to any of those."

### **Cost of UC Education Soars**

White's concern about reliance on student fees mirrored harsh criticism leveled at the UC system by State Senator Jackie Speier during a hearing at UC Merced on Nov. 9. Annual fees charged to UC students have increased by over \$1,500 in the past few years, and UC regents are currently considering another increase.

The increasing cost of a UC education has some wondering who will be able to afford attending the vastly expanded campus that administrators envision. As one mural near UCSC's international dorm asks, "Where are all the students of color?"

If members of the community want a say in the direction the University will take for the next 15 years, this month is the last chance.

"If individuals or government agencies believe that the draft EIR is 'inadequate' in any way, this is the time for them to let us know," Burns said.

Two public hearings are scheduled for the month of November. The first is slated for Nov. 16, from 7 p.m. to 10 p.m. at the University Inn at 611 Ocean Street. The second public meeting will be held on campus Nov. 30, from 3 p.m. to 6 p.m. at the Stevenson College Events Center and Dining Hall, located at 1156 High Street.

Drafts of the University's Long Range Development Plan (LRDP) and its Environmental Impact Report are currently available online, at Central Library in downtown Santa Cruz, and from the FedEx-Kinkos location on Pacific Avenue. ■