

Feature

UCSC: In Search of an Identity

A look at UCSC's ups and downs with the people who were there from the start.

by Charlotte Kaufman

AS YOU SETTLE DOWN IN YOUR dorm room or apartment and begin exploring the foot paths surrounding the colleges at UCSC, you will encounter a menagerie of myths and legends. Some are accurate while others have become distorted with age, but all are part of the complex history of a relatively young campus. Going into its 19th year of existence, UCSC has already experienced enough setbacks and triumphs to fill a 10 week mini-series on PBS.

What are those weathered stone buildings at the base of campus? And who thought of putting the campus on a redwood-covered hill? Depending on who you talk to among the staff, faculty, and original alumni, shedding light on these mysteries may make you dreamy-eyed about the "ideal becoming real" or bitter over the hardships which took a toll on UCSC.

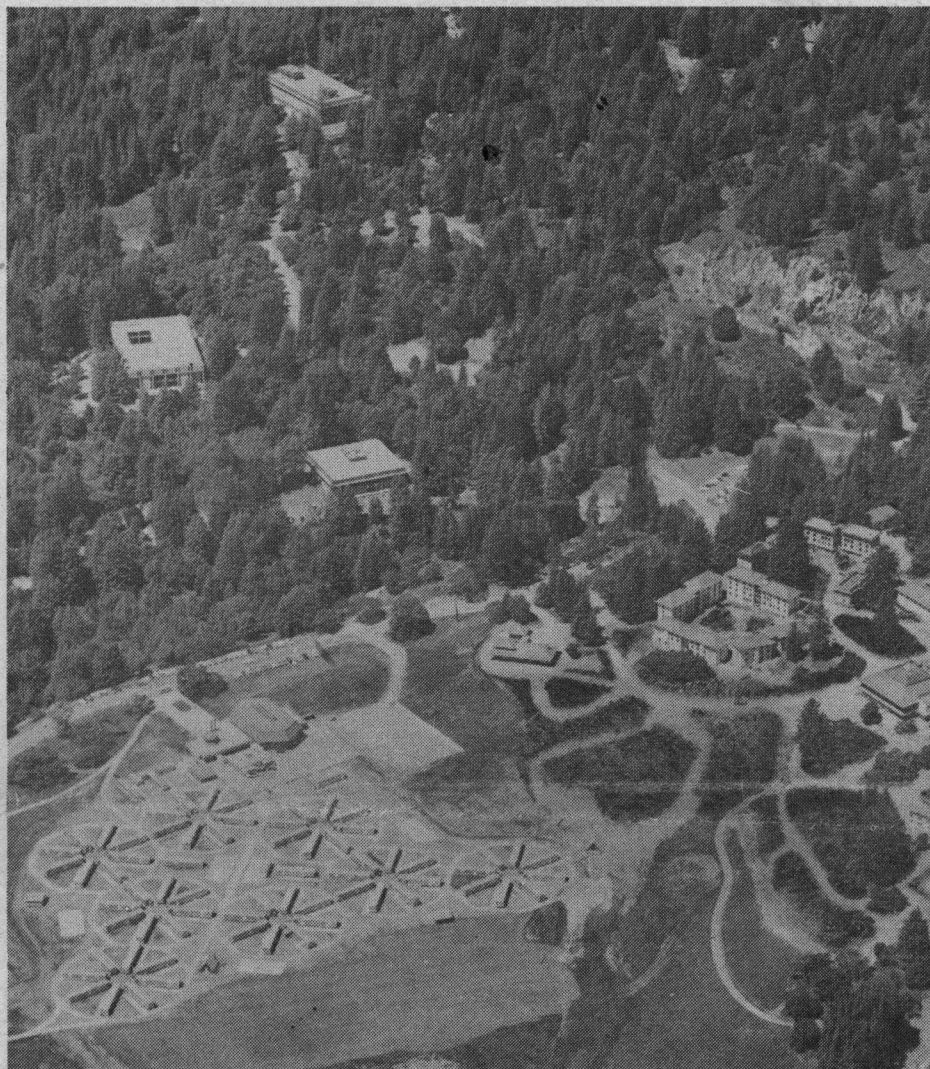
The genesis of UCSC dates back to the 1950s, when a strong demand existed for new campuses in California. Higher education was no longer just a privilege for the upper class. WWII vets returned to the states and went to college, and the post-war baby boom promised a steady stream of undergraduates. State colleges and universities were overflowing across the nation making expansion inevitable. California led the nation in developing state higher education.

In 1960 a joint effort of educators from the junior and state colleges and the University of California produced the *Master Plan for Higher Education in California 1960-1970*. The report presented the educational missions of state institutions, which would soon include three new UC campuses.

The Regents arrived here in 1960 to inspect Santa Cruz, one of the two final sites narrowed from an original 90 choices for a campus. Scotty Sinclair, editor of the *Santa Cruz Sentinel*, greeted the group on behalf of the Chamber of Commerce committee formed to "get the UC in Santa Cruz." It was a cool sunny day as they arrived at the century-old ranch overlooking the Monterey Bay and a small tourist beach town. The ranch was the site of a once prosperous lime, and cement company owned by the millionaire Henry Cowell. When Cowell died he left considerable assets known as the Cowell Estate. Redwoods, meadows, barns, kilns, bunkhouses, and dozens of cows dotted the 2000 acre ranch.

The Cowell Ranch became the obvious site: a scenic parcel of natural landscape at an attractive price, surrounded by an eager, cooperative business community and local government. After visiting the other site in Santa Clara County, the Almaden Valley, the Regents began to seriously consider Santa Cruz.

"Santa Cruz was the ideal place to live for a business or professional person," said Lou Fackler, Assistant Vice Chancellor of Facilities, who came to Santa Cruz in 1963 as a Senior Engineer. Fackler explained that the town offered cultural stimulation and a comfortable



The first 100 UCSC students lived in these trailers on the east field.

For years UCSC has faced pressure to become a more traditional university. It remains to be seen whether it can truly define and implement its educational vision.

environment in which to live. "Socially and economically, the Santa Cruz community knew that change and growth were coming and it saw the University as a great opportunity." The eager Santa Cruz community went to work on proposals for the Regents. In December 1960 it presented *A UC Campus at Santa Cruz* report for approval by the Regents. The report pledged local cooperation with the University in developing the off-campus community. Water and sewage facilities were guaranteed at no cost to the University.

"The community really embraced us," said Fackler. Early plans show that the Santa Cruz Rentals and Owners Association wrote a letter to the Regents expressing "a willingness to adopt regulations to govern rentals to students." Among other ideas that never materialized were bathhouses near the ocean built especially for the UCSC community, land allocation for off-campus student housing, and buildings for sororities and fraternities.

Santa Cruz Mayor John Laird, a 1972

graduate of Stevenson College, pointed out that the community "really expected the University to come, business to boom, sports teams to cheer, and everything about a traditional university. And what shows up—but UCSC."

The Cowell Foundation and UC Regents reached a price agreement for the 2000 acres in March 1961. The University would buy the land at \$1100 per acre and the foundation would in turn donate the money to the new UCSC over the next three years. In July 1961 the Regents approved the plans and upon the recommendation of UC President Clark Kerr, appointed UC Dean of Academic Planning Dean McHenry as Chancellor to UCSC.

Kerr and McHenry had special designs for the new campus. Both were intimately involved with problems in higher education at larger US institutions. Nationwide discontent was growing with the "student factories" which created an impersonal atmosphere, bureaucratic confusion, and placed an emphasis on research at

the expense of undergraduate education. Kerr and McHenry sought to avoid these problems and looked to the small college concept for a different approach.

The challenge was to emulate but not imitate the Oxford and Cambridge models. They studied the experiences of the Claremont Colleges, Harvard, and Yale—all institutions which borrowed ideas from the collegiate system. UCSC would preserve traditional academic values and at the same time embrace innovation and change. By utilizing the advantages of the small liberal arts college and fortifying a campus with the advantages of a larger university, UCSC would cater to the undergraduate—"to seem small while growing larger."

The catch was to sell it to the Regents. Although many members of both the Board of Regents and the UC Academic Senate supported the small college concept, a concern existed that the new campus would require more money and attention and become an elitist institution. Another fear was that the new UC might fail to achieve the University of California's other academic missions to promote research, professional training, and graduate programs.

DESPITE THESE STUMBLING blocks McHenry said it was not too difficult to convince the Regents to approve the concept. But he did promise that UCSC would not cost the UC more money than the other campuses. "If I had to do it again I would not make such a commitment," McHenry told *City on a Hill* in a recent interview. "But that was the price I thought I had to pay to get UCSC started."

The Academic Plan and the Long Range plans were approved in 1962 and 1963 respectively. Page Smith, soon to become Provost of Cowell College, and Byron Stookey, Assistant to the Chancellor, and subsequently director of Academic Planning, came to UCSC in 1963, playing major roles in the design of the new campus. The UCSC Master Plan included a maximum enrollment projection of 27,500 students. There were to be 20-25 colleges as well as pre-professional schools and graduate programs.

McHenry spent the majority of his time fundraising and looking for faculty and staff. He focused on provosts who would in turn search for professors. Karl Lamb, from the University of Michigan, joined the staff as a consultant and later decided to stay on as a politics professor—in those days the board was called Government Studies. Kenneth Thimann left Harvard to become the Provost of Crown and Dean of Sciences. Many of the original faculty and administrators are still on the campus today.

"I should have brought more senior professors," said McHenry. "We needed their seasoned knowledge; we needed their knowledge about hiring." He added that because so many original faculty are now eligible for tenure, "the tenure situation has been very difficult."

"We wanted people who were first and

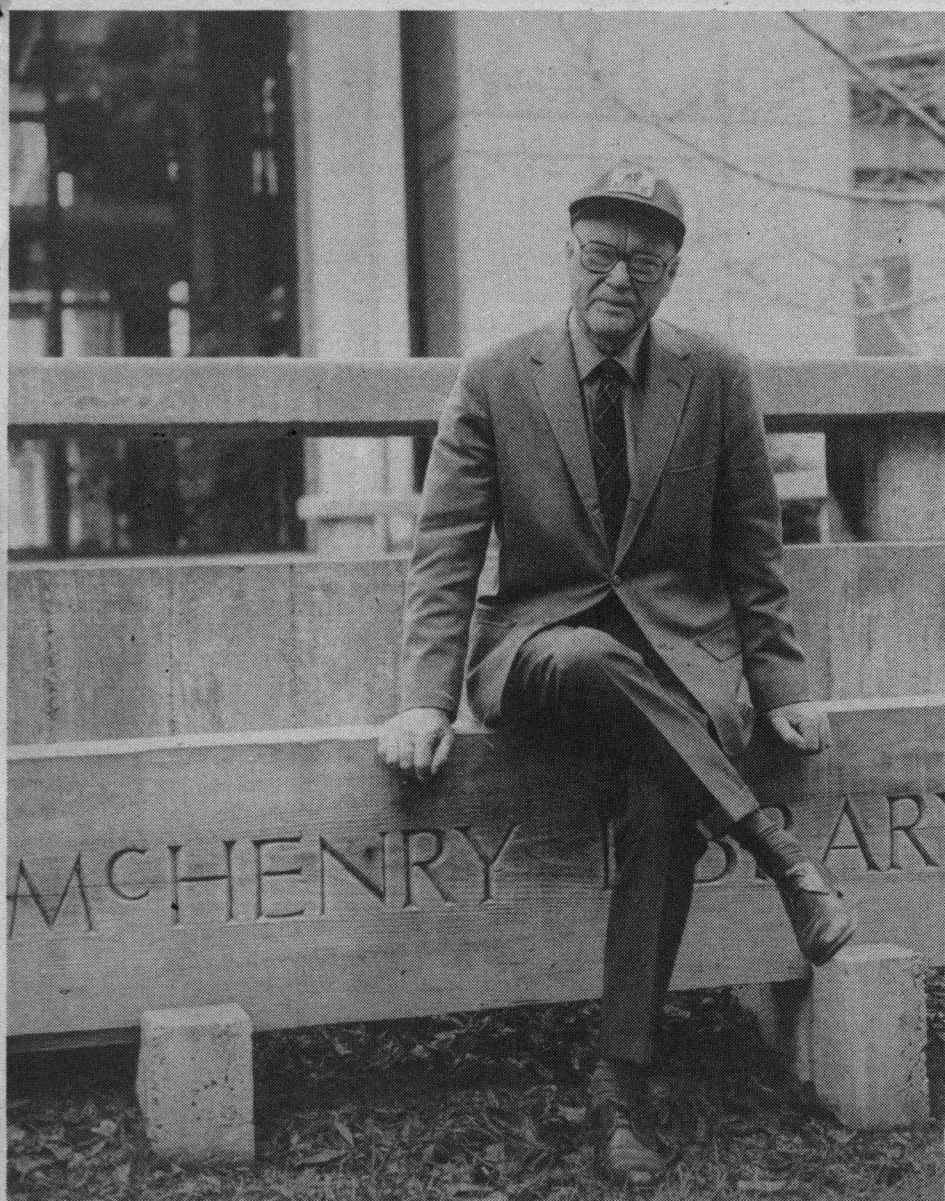


Photo by MICHAEL KAY

UCSC's first chancellor Dean McHenry.

foremost teachers," said Barbara Sheriff, who was Assistant to the Chancellor from 1961 to 1981. "But we wanted the combination—a very good teacher who was also a very good researcher."

In its early years, UCSC was "the place to go" for both educators and students. Peter Euben, a politics professor who came here in 1967 said, "People really cared enough to give up 'prestigious positions' to be part of what was an undergraduate experiment."

"When there was this new campus," said Laird, "that was so beautiful, had pass-fail, individual colleges, and professors who paid attention, it was a dream."

The University took shape as applications filed in, faculty arrived, and buildings appeared. Although Cowell was not completed on time, the university opened on schedule in the fall of 1965. The first 100 Cowell students lived in trailers—Cowell Mobile Estates—located on the east field. The "pioneers" used the field house as a cafeteria and waded through muddy paths to their classes held in Thimann Labs. "The first year was a formative year for morale," said McHenry.

The competition to get into UCSC was extremely high. "People often forget that the redirection of students started in Santa Cruz when we used to have four good applications to every space," McHenry added.

The University opened a new college every year and by 1969 Cowell, Stevenson, Crown, Merrill, and Porter held students. UCSC housed over 50 percent of its students, which was the most ever in the history of UC campuses.

Most colleges had social "college nights,"

core classes for freshpersons, seminars, and interdisciplinary study—classes taught by professors from two or three different boards of study. Professors would receive half their salary from the college they were affiliated with, and participated in the academic and social planning of that college. The other half of their salary came from their board of study. Eighty percent of the classes were campus-wide and 20 percent were college courses. "The colleges really became an academic family," said Laird.

UCSC used a pass-fail system with narrative evaluations. The grade option was available only to the sciences. The system was selected to ensure a close faculty and student relationship and to discourage competition.

UCSC did, however, suffer growing pains. Some students and professors lost interest in the courses and college nights. The interdisciplinary core courses faded into the woodwork and were only recently revived. "Teachers didn't want to teach in fields that they didn't really understand," said Thimann, "although they did really have the ability. It was a great disappointment."

"There was not enough continuity in the college courses," said Physics professor Ron Ruby. "We should have clearly focused on the first two years of the undergraduate education." Ruby came to UCSC in 1965 and is presently serving on UCSC's 20-Year Planning Committee. Ruby pointed out that in spite of the academic drawbacks, UCSC was—and is even more so now—successful in creating a supportive atmosphere for the freshperson.

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But during the late 1960s and early '70s, students started to move down the hill en masse. Students nationwide began to form a militant community staging protests, sit ins, teach ins, and rallies. "UCSC brought home the [Vietnam] war and other issues of the time in a way that probably would not have been brought home otherwise," said Laird.

In 1972 Laird went to Washington DC with 74 other UCSC students to lobby against the war and the US invasion of Cambodia. That same year the campus shut down for over a month as UCSC students joined a nationwide campus strike. During that time the students staged a series of actions and marches in the city of Santa Cruz.

"UCSC was one of the most active campuses in the nation," said Santa Cruz city councilmember and UCSC Community Studies Field Coordinator Mike Rotkin. Students blocked traffic on Highway 17 for over two hours in May 1972. They also successfully prevented Marine recruiters from coming to the campus. Faculty members and some community members participated in many of the student actions and rallies. The Santa Cruz County Board of Supervisors met with over 2000 students and residents and by a 3-2 vote agreed to send Supervisor Philip Harry to Washington DC to deliver their resolution condemning the war.

THE STUDENT VOTE GAINED strength in 1972 when the voting age was lowered to 18. At the same time the California Supreme Court decided that

students had the right to vote in their college town. "The student vote was probably the most aggravating thing to the business community," said Vice Chancellor Fackler. Santa Cruz was one of the few cities to carry Democratic candidate George McGovern in the 1972 presidential election.

The UCSC administration and the UC system became the focal point of student activism by the mid 1970s. In June 1977 police arrested 401 students in the largest student protest in the history of UCSC. A large march protesting racism ended up at Central Services, where students staged a sit-in and met UCSC administrators. Among the many issues discussed were UC investments in South Africa, UC changes in enrollment requirements, and Third World and Native American studies courses. The arrests were made in an orderly fashion but cost the city over \$10,000.

By the time Chancellor Robert Sinsheimer came to campus in the fall of 1977 he faced overwhelming student discontent, low enrollment, a serious attrition rate, and a weary faculty. Only three more colleges had been built since 1969 and Governor Ronald Reagan cut funding for the construction of College Eight—now housed in Clark Kerr Hall. The state legislature cut funds, the new UC presidents were not as supportive of UCSC, the Regents threatened to change the smaller UCSC campuses—UCSC and Irvine—into state colleges.

"Although there was a strong, implicit educational vision in the early days," said Euben, "UCSC did not articulate explicitly its educational vision and was not sufficiently committed to it to withstand the changes of the '70s."

"One of the real difficulties," said Ruby, "is

that what we attempted was not consistent with the kind of resources we get being a state university." Although the campus originally planned small classes, Ruby pointed out that UCSC ended up with intermediate size classes. As a result, existing resources were overused.

With larger class sizes, written evaluations, and paperwork for both colleges and boards of studies, faculty found themselves under a lot of pressure. A broad spectrum of opinions developed on the college system—many still supported it but agreed that improvements were needed. Others believed that the colleges were a failure academically and only served a social and residential purpose.

After a year of meetings, research, and hearings, the chancellor released a set of broad administration principles—the campus would be reorganized in the 1979-1980 academic year. Changes included associating faculty primarily with their board of study, empowering divisions with the ability to define the educational responsibility of the faculty, and assigning colleges their "academic missions."

"The special flavor of this place stems from the colleges," said McHenry. "I much deplore the downgrading of the colleges."

Student outcry claimed that reorganization plans did not include enough student and faculty input. "Sinsheimer was new—he didn't know what to do," said Euben. "The faculty was ultimately at fault. There were pressures from the outside and we failed to articulate our goals. It was an easy solution instead of trying to force the colleges to produce coherent academic programs."

Ruby said that his feeling was "that there was not quite enough direction of the faculty." He believed that reorganization solved some of the

problems UCSC was experiencing.

Since reorganization a number of other changes emerged on campus. A grade option was instituted in 1981; the school mascot changed from a banana slug to a sea lion in 1982; and a new set of general requirements will replace the breadth requirements this year. There is a proposal for a Research and Development Center, plans for new colleges, graduate schools, pre-professional programs, and a projected enrollment of 15-20,000 students in 20 years.

These changes are applauded by some and criticized by others in the UCSC community. Some praise UCSC's growth in the sciences, achievements in research, and strengthening of general education. At the same time there are worries about a "publish or perish" mentality spreading among faculty. Concerns are raised over whether UCSC recruitment will reach out to minority and working class areas. There are also fears that UCSC will turn into a mini-UC Berkeley.

As the University sets out to articulate its educational visions—as recently suggested by UC President David Gardner—the direction of UCSC will be decided in the next few years. Many will argue that the vision is already embedded in the campus and can be utilized to meet Gardner's challenge. Others argue that the vision was nebulous and it's time to start from scratch.

It is obvious that compromises will have to be made. But as Peter Euben said "Neither the Dean of Admissions nor the Chancellor should be articulating what the educational vision of the institution should be. It should be the students, the faculty, the administration together." P