

Chancellor's panel 'apolitical'

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SANTA CRUZ — Members of a panel appointed by UCSC Chancellor Robert Sinsheimer to gauge the financial feasibility of the university's proposed "research and development center" said Monday that their work is in no way intended to influence the ongoing struggle between the university and the city over the controversial project.

"The panel is to use its expertise in technical matters of economics and financial feasibility — that's its sole function," said Ronald Grieson, a UCSC economist specializing in urban economics and one of eight persons named to the panel by Sinsheimer. "My understanding of the mission is it's

very much technical. I see this group as quite apolitical," Grieson said.

In a press release issued by the university's public relations office, Sinsheimer indicated he had formed the panel in response to faculty concerns, expressed last fall, that a more thorough economic analysis of the 100-acre high-tech research and manufacturing center was needed before the project proceeded.

But news of the panel's formation was greeted skeptically by some faculty members. One professor wondered why no one from the computer industry was on the panel, while another expressed concern that the chancellor's move might have been motivated by a desire to pre-empt the work of an Academic Senate committee which will also be

studying the research center proposal in coming months.

A third faculty member dismissed the panel out-of-hand as "an expansionist kind of group" which would "undoubtedly support" the project. "They are people," said literature professor Forrest Robinson, "who have in the past and continue to have in their interest (the) major expansion that the research and development park represents."

"Neither in the past, nor in the future, nor now do I have any vested interest in expansion," Grieson responded Monday. "No one ever asked me if I favor or don't favor the project, nor have I volunteered an opinion," he said. "Nor do I have one."

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Grieson said he could foresee no conflict between Sinsheimer's panel and the Academic Senate committee. "The two are in no way inconsistent," he said. The economist said that Senate committee promised to be a "generalist group rather than a group (like the panel) that is acquainted with technical matters of economics and finance."

Panel member Jack Baskin, a local developer and one of the R&D park's original promoters, said that he would "have no part in the (research center) development as a contractor.

"So I really can be totally objective about it," Baskin said. "I'm not on the panel to develop a job."

Baskin, who last year gave the university \$1

million for its computer-education program, said of the panel's work, "It's purely an economic review and investigation to see if (the research center) is economically feasible — will it generate the dollars they think it will?"

(University officials estimated last year that the center, which would eventually employ some 2,000 persons — including 600 in manufacturing jobs — would bring in \$16 million to \$19 million by the end of this century. But a faculty committee report issued last fall stated that the projections could be off by as much as \$10 million, because inflation had not been taken into account.)

County Bank and Trust president Reese Davis, also appointed to the panel by Sinsheimer, called the

group's work, yet to begin, "just an arm's length study of the pros and cons of the R&D park."

Other persons appointed to the panel by Sinsheimer include Edward (Bud) Prindle, real estate broker and appraiser; Johna Vanderpool, assistant vice president and branch manager for Citicorp Savings; Jack Michaelson, a UCSC economics professor who specializes in finance; Cabrillo College President John Petersen and County Assessor Robert Petersen.

The assessor said last week that he hoped the panel would not "be a group that would be used to bias negotiations between the university and the city" over the research park proposal.