

UCSC: Doubts dim early hopes for reorganization plan

(First of two articles)

By MIKE WALLACE

"Gifted with a unique academic structure, gifted with this unique setting, we can define a very special academic mission."

Those words were uttered Thursday, Oct. 26, by Robert L. Sinsheimer, Chancellor of the University of California at Santa Cruz, during his formal inauguration. A gathering of faculty and students jammed the Upper Quarry on campus for the event, and gave the new chancellor a standing ovation before and after his speech.

The day before, the chancellor had unveiled to the Academic Senate his proposal for academic reorganization of the Santa Cruz campus. The faculty voted a resolution of support, and Paul Niebanck, chairman of the Academic Senate, later said:

"I have never seen, never felt a unity . . . such as the scene at the Faculty Senate on Wednesday."

Last week, the committee which had been working out the details of the chancellor's plan unveiled a reorganization proposal that, in some ways, is different from the one put forth in October. In some quarters of the campus, the new plan has been greeted as a bombshell, and has already provoked opposition and counter-proposals. Some faculty and administrators are even saying the new plan goes against the tradition of the Santa Cruz campus and threatens to turn UCSC — once considered one of the great academic experiments in the nation — into just another university.

-0-

When the Santa Cruz campus opened its doors in 1965, it was clearly understood

"I have never seen unity . . ."

that it was to be a creature different altogether from the other eight campuses of the University of California. It had been born of the notion held by Clark Kerr, then president of the university system, that the university was not devoting enough time or energy to undergraduate education.

Kerr planned UCSC with his former college roommate, Dean E. McHenry, who had become a professor of political science at UCLA, and who was named the first chancellor of the new campus. In the first catalogue for UCSC, McHenry wrote of his hope for the new campus:

"The Santa Cruz campus . . . will seek to organize teaching in such a way that the advantages of a small college — particularly opportunity for discourse — are combined with those of a large university — great scholars, excellent libraries and laboratories, and a rich and varied cultural life. We hope to overcome the too common separation of inquiry from teaching, of one discipline from others, of faculty from students."

In addition to its emphasis on teaching and on undergraduate education, the Santa Cruz campus was to be distinguished from the other UC campuses in two major ways:

—A pass-fail system would take the place of grades, the idea being that courses would be small enough to allow professors to write detailed narrative evaluations of student work, and that these evaluations would be more precise and meaningful than letter grades.

—There would be a number of small, residential liberal-arts colleges within the university, each run by its own provost and emphasizing a different area of education.

The college concept is one of the most difficult things to understand about the Santa Cruz campus, and it has not been uncommon for incoming freshmen to discover that they had misunderstood it from their reading of the UCSC catalogue. Yet the college structure is the most important element of the campus.

The first catalogue describes the Santa Cruz campus as an exercise in

"academic federalism," going on to say:

"The colleges at Santa Cruz will be intellectual states within the federal university; each will have its own traditions and history, eccentricities and commitments." The colleges have two primary functions: they serve as communities and as academic units.

The former function was perhaps best described by one of the founding faculty members of the UCSC campus, who defined a college as "a community of friends, joined together in pursuit of the truth."

That statement reflects the tone the colleges aimed for. Each college had a certain academic emphasis, but within each college were faculty members in varying disciplines. The college was to be a smaller community within the university where professors of literature, history, biology, economics,

politics, philosophy, psychology, art, chemistry, sociology, anthropology and music could mix personally and professionally. And, as faculty mixed with faculty, so they would mix with students, just as students would mix with students working in different disciplines.

With a college of 400 to 800 students and 30 to 40 faculty members (whose offices are surrounded by student residences), close contact between a wide range of people was expected to be the norm. Contact was further facilitated by special college activities — such as weekly dinners with the faculty joining the students at the dining hall.

Contact between students and faculty was always on the mind of founding chancellor

on, never felt such

McHenry. In 1971, he told a student newspaper reporter:

"When I was at UCLA, I knew of one student in the political science department who went through four years at UCLA and got straight A's. When the time came for him to apply to graduate school, he couldn't find a faculty member to write him a recommendation because the classes were so large and the department was so large that nobody knew who he was. I don't think something like that could happen here."

Because of the tightly-knit nature of the college community, most students (especially at the earlier colleges) identify more closely with their college than with the university as a whole. The alumni association reflects this reality by dividing its \$10 annual membership fee on a 60-40 basis, with the colleges getting 60 percent and the campus-wide association getting 40 percent. Some alumni, when

they join the association, include a few dollars extra "for the college."

As an academic unit, the role of the college is more difficult to comprehend. In a traditional university, a literature professor would be employed by the literature board, and the professor's duties would consist of teaching literature courses to literature students, as well as doing research in his or her field.

At Santa Cruz, faculty are hired by both the board of studies and the college, and are responsible to both. A literature professor at one college would find that his

teaching duties, by and large, would consist of teaching literature to literature students campuswide.

However, that literature professor would also, in theory at least, be obligated to the college and its academic program, and would be expected to contribute to it.

Each college has a certain area of academic emphasis. Currently, Cowell represents the humanities, Stevenson the social sciences, Crown the natural sciences, and so forth. Within these emphases, colleges were expected to put together a broad general education program for undergraduates — drawing on the expertise of a wide range of faculty members.

Also, it was hoped that the colleges would be the focus for interdisciplinary work for upper division students (juniors and seniors). An example of an interdisciplinary program might be American Studies, which would incorporate fields such as history, literature, economics, philosophy, politics and cultural anthropology.

This was how the system was laid out, but along the way something, or rather a number of things happened.

For one thing, the scale of the university was cut back. In the original plan, UCSC was expected eventually to grow to a campus of 27,500 students and 15 to 20 colleges. In the spring of 1971, Chancellor McHenry asked the Regents to limit the size to 11,500 students, and within a couple of years it became obvious that budget cuts and decreasing numbers of students statewide would cause the campus to remain at eight colleges and about 6,000 students for some time to come. This meant that organizational difficulties at the campus could not be resolved through further growth, but had to be dealt with inside the structure as it currently existed.

A second problem was that many faculty members felt the colleges were not working out academically. Cowell College, for instance, has been through four separate freshman general education courses. Crown had one for two years, scrapped it because of student and faculty

(Continued on page 7)

GREEN SHEET

December 6, 1978

Reorganization at UCSC

(Continued from page 1)

complaints, then a few years later found some students asking for it to be reinstated. Other colleges had similar difficulties. Some faculty members were unhappy about the colleges and felt they weren't getting enough contact with people in their own field of interest.

When McHenry retired in the summer of 1974, it was widely hoped on the campus that a new chancellor, looking at things with a fresh eye, would be able to effect organizational changes that would retain the strengths of the campus and improve areas where things didn't seem to be working out.

The second chancellor at

UCSC was Mark Newell Christensen, a tall, slender, boyish-looking geologist who had earned a high reputation as an administrative troubleshooter at UC-Berkeley.

Christensen made no bold moves during his first year as Chancellor, and few people expected him to, since he needed some time to grasp the problems and possibilities. But during that time, others on campus had a chance to assess him, and some didn't like what they saw. Word began to spread that he was weak, indecisive and not terribly competent for the top job.

In November, 1975, after over a year in office, the chancellor was challenged by the academic senate to

produce a reorganization plan. Christensen responded with his proposal on Nov. 12. The plan he put forth had three parts:

—Responsibility for undergraduate education would be vested in the colleges. The divisions of humanities and social sciences "would wither away."

—A special graduate division would be created to handle the humanities and social sciences.

— school of natural sciences would be established to handle the science curri-

culum apart from the colleges.

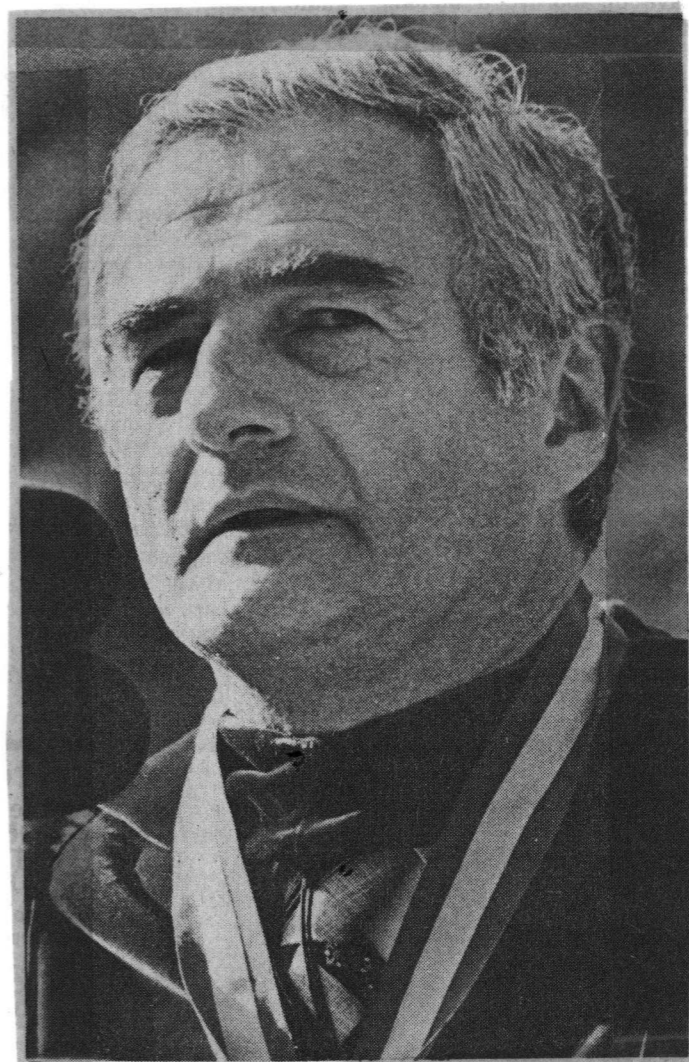
Christensen's proposal went over like a lead balloon. Two weeks later, the Academic Senate met and adopted, on a voice vote, a resolution calling it "divisive and illiberal" and rejecting it as unworthy of consideration.

With that, it was obvious that Christensen's days were numbered. By the time of the January meeting of the university's Board of Regents, virtually every high-ranking faculty member on campus had called for Christensen's resignation. The vocal lack of confidence in his administration left Christensen no choice.

He quit, effective Jan. 31, 1976.

While most faculty members were glad to see Christensen go, there was a minority view, expressed by one old-timer on the faculty.

"I think they ganged up on the wrong guy," he said recently. "With Christensen, the faculty and the colleges had a golden opportunity to take advantage of the vacuum in the central administration, and to go ahead and make the changes themselves. Now they'll have to take what Sinsheimer gives them."



ROBERT SINSHIMER: We can define a very special academic mission.

REFERENCE

UCSC 10 1990

UCSC 10 1990