

UCSC growth stirs strong feelings on all sides

By KATHARINE BALL
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UC-Santa Cruz officials say they are making unprecedented promises to help the city and county of Santa Cruz accommodate a near-doubling of university enrollment, but city and county officials said this morning those promises are full of holes.

UCSC expects to grow from its current 9,000 students to about 15,000 students by 2005.

To accommodate that growth, the university has said it will

house 70 percent of the students on campus and contribute to road and sewer improvements in Santa Cruz.

But this morning both Santa Cruz Mayor Mardi Wormhoudt and Supervisor Gary Patton said those promises were non-binding.

Wormhoudt called the promises "window-dressing."

"These offers are well and good, but they need to be tied to concrete, legally binding plans," she said. "The university could grow to 14,999 with

no housing built on campus, and no traffic or sewer improvements."

Wormhoudt said she wanted promises of improvements legally bound to enrollment growth.

Under state law, the university has no obligation to improve municipal or county services even if it puts large strains on them. In fact, only a recently approved law allows the university to offer to pay for such "mitigations."

University officials are

meanwhile arguing that Santa Cruz is acting selfishly in objecting to university expansion plans.

Joe Allen, dean of admissions at UCSC, told a Santa Cruz Chamber of Commerce luncheon group yesterday that limiting enrollment at Santa Cruz deprives students all over the state of the opportunity for a university education.

Minority students are particularly affected, he said.

"Last year we had 15,000 applicants for 1,900 spaces in

the freshman class," Allen said. "These are the sons and daughters of taxpayers whom we're unable to take."

Allen said the University of California system as a whole is supposed to accept anyone in the top 12.5 percent of the state's high school graduating classes, and is already turning away students with B and B+ averages.

The enrollment crunch may herald hard times for affirmative action, as well, he said.

If white students with high

grades are not being admitted, the university could find itself legally challenged by them if the it admits minority students with lower grades, Allen said.

"When you restrict access to the university, it calls into question the whole notion of affirmative action," Allen said. "The citizenry has been willing to accept it as long as (their) sons and daughters are admitted."

He tried to illustrate the value of affirmative action by

describing a student from the Los Angeles barrio who was let in under affirmative action, had a difficult first year, then completed a double major in biology and politics, went on to Harvard Medical School, and now works as a pediatrician in his old Los Angeles neighborhood.

A public hearing on the university's long-range development plan and its environmental impact report will be held Monday at 7 p.m. in the Santa Cruz Civic Auditorium.

REFERENCE

MATSONVILLE
REGISTER-Pajaronian
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