

Regents stick with Blumenthal



Karin Higgins/Contributed photos

New UC Santa Cruz Chancellor George Blumenthal is all smiles after his appointment Wednesday in Davis.

Leader says he welcomes challenges, opportunities

By JONDI GUMZ
SENTINEL STAFF WRITER

DAVIS — George Blumenthal commanded a standing ovation at the Mondavi Center for the Performing Arts on Wednesday when he was introduced as the permanent chancellor for UC Santa Cruz.

Blumenthal, an astrophysicist who stands 6-foot-4, strode to the front of the auditorium at UC Davis, eager to begin. He's been serving as acting chancellor for the past 14 months, filling in after the suicide of Chancellor Denice Denton.

His new salary will be \$310,000, a 10 percent increase over his predecessor's pay.

Faculty lobbied heavily to give him the job permanently and UC regents agreed he's the right choice.

"He's open, honest and straight-forward," said outgoing UC President Robert Dynes, who recommended Blumenthal to the regents.

After the regents' vote, which was unanimous, Blumenthal said he had gained "new insights" into the challenges and opportunities for the Santa Cruz campus during the past 14 months. They include:

George R. Blumenthal

AGE: 61.

BIRTHPLACE: Milwaukee.

CURRENT RESIDENCE: Monte Sereno, just outside Los Gatos.

FAMILY: Wife Kelly Weisberg (in photo at right) is a law professor at UC Hastings College of the Law in San Francisco; two children.

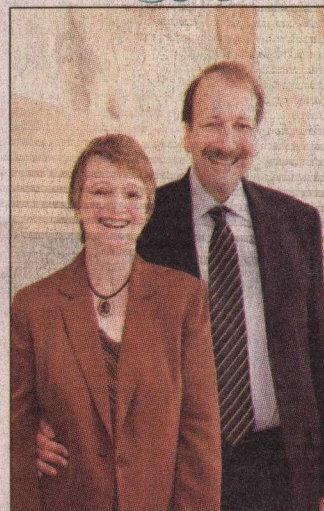
ACADEMIC EXPERTISE:

The origin of structure in the universe, particularly the role of dark matter in the formation of galaxies and galaxy clusters.

ADMINISTRATIVE EXPERIENCE:

Chair of UC's Academic Senate for 2004-05; faculty representative to the UC Board of Regents from 2003 to 2005; chaired the UCSC division of the Academic Senate from 2001-2003. Served previously as department chair of astronomy and astrophysics.

FAVORITE MUSIC: Classical.



FAVORITE PLACE IN SANTA CRUZ: The trails in the redwoods in the upper part of campus.

FAVORITE SCIENTIST: Albert Einstein because he combined brilliant insight with a sense of justice and humanity.

Community responds

Members of the campus community and greater area shared what the top priorities for the chancellor should be.

SHANN RITCHIE, STEWARD, COALITION OF UNIVERSITY EMPLOYEES

■ A living wage for clerical staff at UCSC, which means enough of an increase to offset the medical/benefit increase that we will see this year. Otherwise the percent increase in medical co-pays will essentially be a 'pay cut' for clerical employees. We need to stop being paid based on market research that established us at agricultural wage levels;

■ UC to establish better relations with the city of Santa Cruz. University growth without ample coverage to the city for infrastructure pressures is not acceptable;

■ Hands off our pension.

BRIAN KING, CABRILLO COLLEGE PRESIDENT

We hope to build on successful collaborations begun during the interim tenure of Chancellor Blumenthal, including our agreement to make some UCSC housing available to Cabrillo students and to partner in making transfer from Cabrillo to UCSC even more seamless. We have been very impressed with interim Chancellor Blumenthal, and his comprehensive knowledge of Cabrillo and community colleges.

ALBERTO RAFOLS, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, CULTURAL COUNCIL OF SANTA CRUZ COUNTY

This community loves and appreciates the arts, and UCSC is one of the premier engines for arts and culture in Santa Cruz County. Through the arts the new chancellor will have the unique opportunity of bridging and communicating with all of us in Santa Cruz County. We look forward to exploring arts and culture collaborations with his office and UCSC.

MICHAEL WATKINS, SANTA CRUZ COUNTY SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS

■ Expand programs that support articulation/linkages beginning in elementary schools.

■ Create opportunities for local high school students to enter the teaching profession by developing a four-year teacher credentialing track, one that attracts bilingual and bicultural teachers;

■ Develop a local scholarship fund that would allow low-income first-generation high school graduates to attend UCSC;

■ Expand existing partnerships among local education agencies such as the Monterey Bay Education Council and the UCSC Educational Partnership Center to attract new dollars into Santa Cruz County;

■ Work to create high school, and even middle school, summer academies for disadvantaged youth on the UCSC campus;

■ Use UCSC's much-heralded research to improve the lives of the Santa Cruz County residents.

BILL TYSELING, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, SANTA CRUZ CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

We believe that Chancellor Blumenthal is committed to resolving the issues of greatest concern to the business community. Of greatest importance are resolving conflicts with the city and county regarding the university's development plans and implementation of that plan's commitment to expanding graduate study and UCSC's research infrastructure. Fundamental to the health and growth of the community's economic base is the development of technology transfer resources to encourage and support faculty and graduate students' commercialization of their discoveries and inventions. We also look forward to an expanded university commitment to encouraging and rewarding engagement of its faculty, staff and students in the community.

JOAN FITTING SCOTT, PRESIDENT OF THE UCSC ALUMNI ASSOCIATION

I look forward to working with our new chancellor, Dr. George Blumenthal, to address what we feel are the top campus priorities: UCSC has unique strengths: an undergraduate experience made special by small college communities; enhanced faculty interaction fostered by the Narrative Evaluation System; a focus on writing and critical thinking skills; a liberal arts foundation upon which our reputation was originally built; a rich intellectual environment due to an emphasis on interdisciplinarity, diversity, accessibility and outreach.

Blumenthal

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■ Working with the city of Santa Cruz to mend relations frayed by plans at the 2,000-acre campus to expand enrollment from 15,000 to 19,500 students. Blumenthal said the city and the campus have many interests in common, and offered to help develop tax-paying businesses and support a climate initiative with the city and county.

■ Addressing the problem of faculty salaries lagging behind home prices. Today, the regents will consider a plan to boost faculty salaries. Ground was broken a few months ago on the long-awaited Ranch View Terrace subdivision for faculty and staff, and Blumenthal also mentioned loans to help faculty buy homes.

■ Figuring out a way to provide child care services to faculty, staff and students. Blumenthal said he was "embarrassed" improvements haven't been made in this area and promised to make the campus "family-friendly." Partnerships with local schools and other entities are being explored, he said, but if those don't work, he promised, "We'll go it alone."

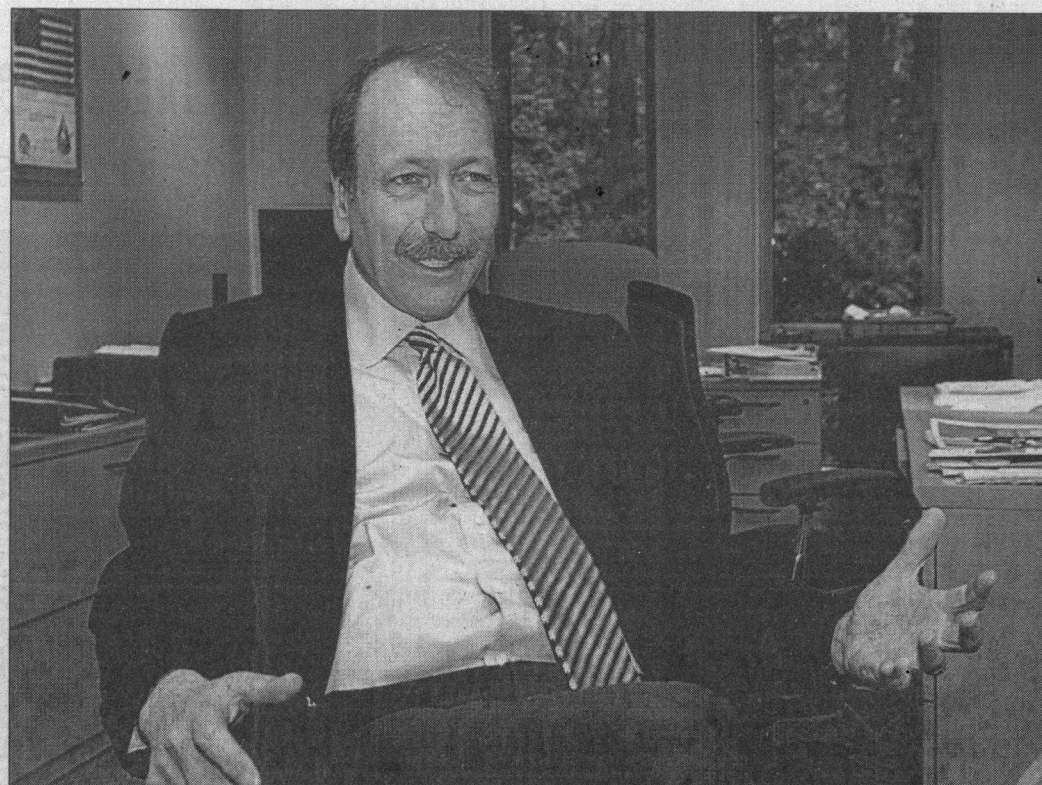
■ Dealing with the \$29 million deficit accumulated by UCSC Extension over the past seven years. Blumenthal said "major changes" have already been made, including cutting some programs. "We're trying to come up with a model that makes sense," he said, adding that the dot-com bust had taken a toll on enrollment.

■ Building programs at the Silicon Valley Center, where the university has a \$330 million contract with NASA. UCSC is proposing to offer a master's and doctoral programs in information and technology management at its Silicon Valley Center and is discussing the idea of a School of Management to offer a master's in business administration. "It's not a proposal yet," Blumenthal said. "We're working with community leaders to see if it's feasible."

Asked about the university's research focus, he defended it and pointed out that UCSC students were second only to Berkeley in the UC system in the percentage of graduates who earn doctorates.

UCSC has pioneered new programs in computer gaming, computer storage, digital arts and bioinformatics, he pointed out.

Blumenthal promised the regents that he would "work tirelessly for the success of the campus," including building new instructional programs, promoting diversity and optimizing resources. He said he's already begun that task as interim chancellor, meeting with community



Dan Coyro/Sentinel file

George Blumenthal has been acting chancellor at UC Santa Cruz since the death of Denice Denton.

members, consulting with faculty and talking to students.

He hasn't taken a vacation in 14 months, so he plans to take some time off with his wife, Kelly Weisberg, a professor at UC Hastings College of the Law in San Francisco. She taught her students Wednesday morning then came to Davis for the announcement.

The couple, who live in Monte Sereno outside Los Gatos, have two children: Aaron, a senior at UC Berkeley, and Sarah, a freshman at Harvard.

Blumenthal said it takes him 30-40 minutes to drive to work. He noted that he is sympathetic with community complaints about campus growth and the accompanying traffic congestion.

He said he'll cut his commute once he moves to the chancellor's house on campus, and he quipped about one of the perks of being chancellor — a parking place.

Blumenthal's style has gained him support in a number of circles.

City Councilwoman Lynn Robinson welcomed his selection, saying, "We can move forward on the hard work ahead."

Assemblyman John Laird, D-Santa Cruz, a UCSC alumnus, agreed.

"He doesn't have to start from scratch in dealing with community growth issues," Laird said. "He has 24 years of experience with the community and he comes from the faculty, which will provide continuity in leadership."

Steve Kang, former dean of UCSC's engineering school and now UC Merced chancellor, said

Blumenthal brought "stability" and "peace" to the campus. One of his strengths, Kang said, is communicating with the faculty.

"He listens to students," said Christi Suchil, a leader in the UCSC Student Union Assembly and a member of the advisory committee for the chancellor search. "He meets with us."

Donna Murphy, vice chancellor of university relations at UCSC, said that is Blumenthal's style.

"He listens to all sides, then he makes a decision and sticks with it," she said. "If he disagrees, he'll speak that and allow you to respond."

Wednesday afternoon's announcement was a bit anti-climactic, after regents Chairman Richard Blum made a comment in the morning that the regents would be voting on Blumenthal later.

"Maybe he was just excited," said Ashish Sahni, Blumenthal's

chief of staff.

"We're happy — George is a good guy," Blum said, after explaining his decision to un-invite former Harvard President Lawrence Summers to speak to the regents. "We just have too many other issues to deal with."

The biggest is an overhaul of the UC Office of the President, which has a \$400 million-plus budget and is viewed as ineffective, judging from a consultant's report issued last week.

UC Provost Wyatt "Rory" Hume will oversee the task of reorganizing the office for greater efficiency, a job that is to be done in stages over the next year or two.

A public reception for the UCSC chancellor will take place 2:30 p.m. Monday at the UCSC Music Recital Hall.

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