

UCSC - Growth



FOR the past decade, Steve Reed has done a pretty good job of moderating a potentially explosive relationship between UCSC and Santa Cruz. The campus' director of public relations and governmental affairs has helped keep "town-gown relationships" at least civil, if not harmonious.

But the next few months are guaranteed to test Reed's smooth-talking skills as UCSC moves ahead with plans to double its size in an antigrowth community. While it may not be the year of conflict between the campus and the community — yet — it is already shaping up to be the year of confrontation.

Town-Gown Showdown

by Sam Mitchell

AFTER years of listening to complaints that UCSC should house more of its own students (the local campus already houses two to three times the number of students that other state campuses do), the university set about the task of doing so.

But ground had barely been broken on a two-acre project near Kresge College when the university was hit with a lawsuit by a group of students claiming that environmental protection laws had been broken.

That lawsuit, which was thrown out of court Friday, was and is more than a comment on one small patch of redwoods — it's a forewarning that the university can expect resistance from every angle as it moves ahead with its 20-year long-range development plan. The strains of the first skirmish are already beginning to take their toll on haggard PR flak-catcher Reed.

"I think this is a real dilemma for the progressive environmental community," he said, referring to people who insist that the university house more students, then scream when the redwoods start falling to make way for the buildings.

This obligation to grow comes from within the local campus, where some faculty members believe larger programs would equal more prestigious ones, but more importantly the pressure to grow comes from the state level. With the exception of UC-Riverside, the Santa Cruz campus is the only campus left with ample space

to grow, and Reed said we can expect to absorb "the lion's share" of the growing college-age population over the next 20 years.

Furthermore, the state has mandated that UC educate students, and that mandate simply can't be ignored.

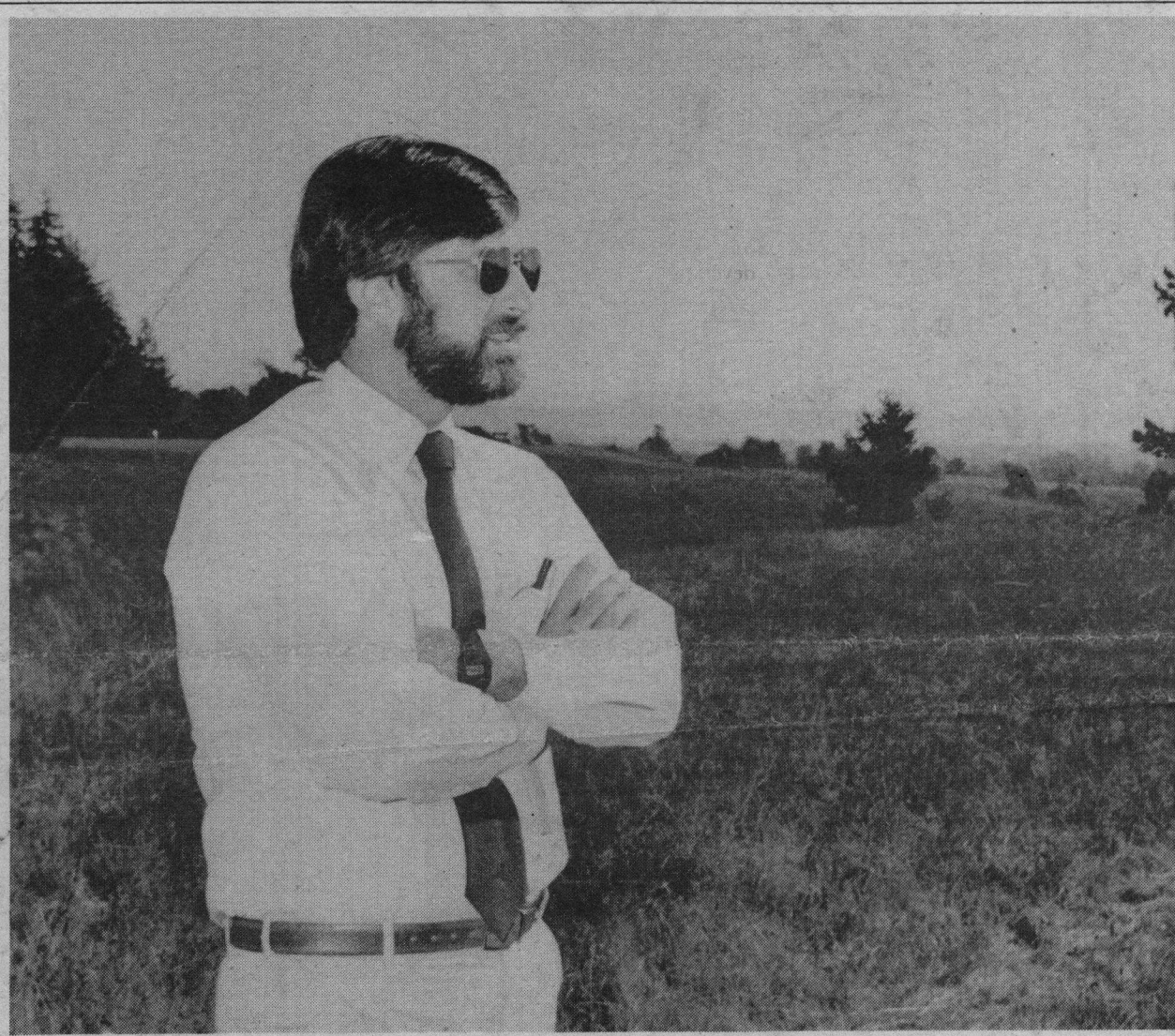
"It may sound arrogant, but this isn't a state park, it's a university. The University of California has an obligation to the people of this state to educate students. We have to do that somehow; we can't just say no."

The 20-year Plan

The most volatile fuel for any upcoming conflagration is UCSC's 20-year long-range development plan. That blueprint for development seeks, among other things, to double the student population (to as many as 15,000 students). It also plans for as many as six new colleges, a 1,500-seat concert hall, a new student center, housing for 70 percent of the students and 20 percent of the staff, and an eastern access road across the environmentally sensitive Pogonip property (see related story).

Graham Bice, a UCSC planner working on the plan's environmental impact report, stressed that the plan (slated to be ready for public review on Dec. 1) is a very general one to show "appropriate uses for various areas of the campus." It should be thought of as a guide for future development only, not as a site-specific plan, Bice said. That way "slight modifications" will be easier to accommodate down the road.

To make a several-hundred page



Reed: "It may sound arrogant, but this isn't a state park, it's a university (with) an obligation to the people of this state to educate students ... we can't just say no"

story short, the plan calls for "in-filling" (plannerspeak for developing) the 2,000-acre campus' 200-acre "academic core" and ringing the core with more new buildings. That would leave about half the campus acreage undeveloped for at least 20 years, and permanently protect some 400 of the most scenic and environmentally sensitive acres as "environmental reserves."

All in all, a pretty good plan that well serves the academic community while protecting the environment, according to Reed.

"I can't buy into the argument that it's rapid growth, because it isn't; or that the building is insensitive, because it isn't," he said. "What we're talking about in the next 20 years is the same slow rate of growth that we've seen in the first 20 years — a few people here, a few people there, year by year.

"The university ought to be com-

mended for doing a lot better (than the original development plan called for)," added Reed. "Instead, we've been criticized almost unbearably."

The Housing Crunch

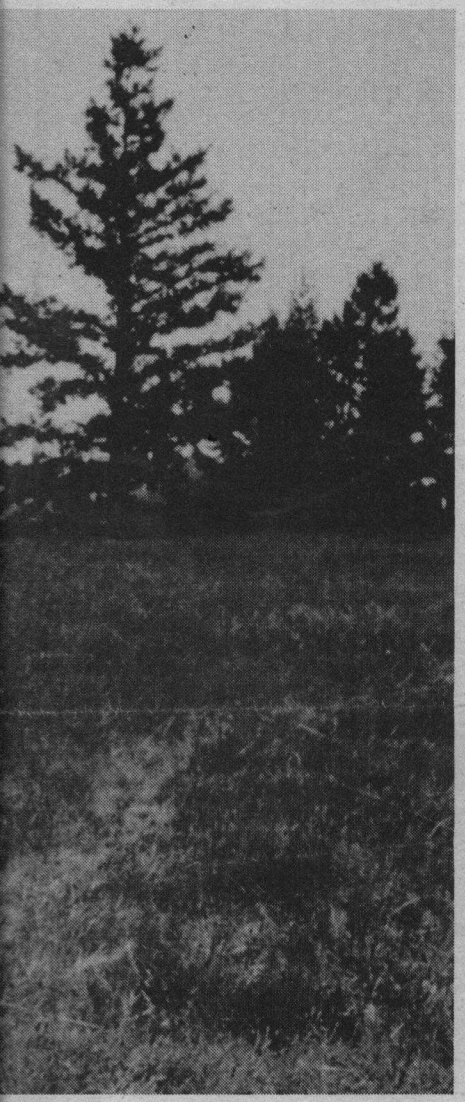
From Reed's position, the criticism may at times have seemed unbearable, but compared to many other college towns, criticism has been relatively light — so far. The major bone of contention between the community and the campus will continue to be the housing crunch in this town, one that students make tighter.

"We don't have the land or the resources in Santa Cruz to deal with this problem," said city council-member Mardi Wormhoudt, who sits on the university's housing task force and the long-range development committee. "We're really down to nothing left.

"They're talking about another 10,000 people (including staff) in 15 years," she added. "I don't fault their goals, but when you talk about the type of growth they're envisioning in a place like Santa Cruz, it's still staggering to think about."

The university is now a few percentage points behind its goal to house 50 percent of its students, but still houses the highest percentage of students in the state university system. Responding to increased pressure from the city to offer even more student housing, the university agreed to a new goal of housing 70 percent of the students by the year 2005 — a goal that would absorb most of the new students moving to Santa Cruz.

The big remaining question is whether the campus will be able to meet that lofty goal when it failed to reach its present one. Reed declined to predict whether the university



GREG PIO

hers or the city's — to supply the needed housing, and to do so in an environmentally sensitive way. Although she was not a plaintiff in the suit against the university in the two-acre housing site issue, she encourages students to "actively debate" the administration on that issue and on the larger issue of campus development.

"I want them to supply housing," hedged Wormhoudt, "but that doesn't mean they don't have to do it in a responsible way."

Patton Speaks Out

Wormhoudt isn't the only community spokesperson pinning Reed and other university officials between a bulldozer blade and a redwood stump. Wormhoudt's political ally in the county, supervisor Gary Patton, is even more adamant that the campus should supply housing. At the same time, he's vociferously opposed to campus growth.

"I don't want the university to grow at all," said Patton, who added he was translating what he understands community sentiment to be. "We are asking that if they *do* decide to grow — whether by cutting down redwood trees or plowing under meadows — that in connection with their growth they provide housing."

Patton, who also sits as a (non-voting) member of the university's long-range planning committee (neither the county nor the city has any legal control over university activities), said the whole notion that UCSC *must* grow is strictly a matter of opinion, and one not shared by the community. Furthermore, growth is not as inevitable as Reed is making it out to be.

"I personally think the university community should rethink the idea that in education, bigger is better," said Patton. "Our community is very clear that, if we had our druthers, UCSC would stay just the way it is."

If his belief is in fact the case, Patton added, the community can "use its *indirect* influences to govern growth decisions at the university" by electing state representatives who would vote against funding new construction projects at UCSC. If the politicians from Santa Cruz don't want the money, there will be plenty of politicians from other college towns who would love a piece of the pie.

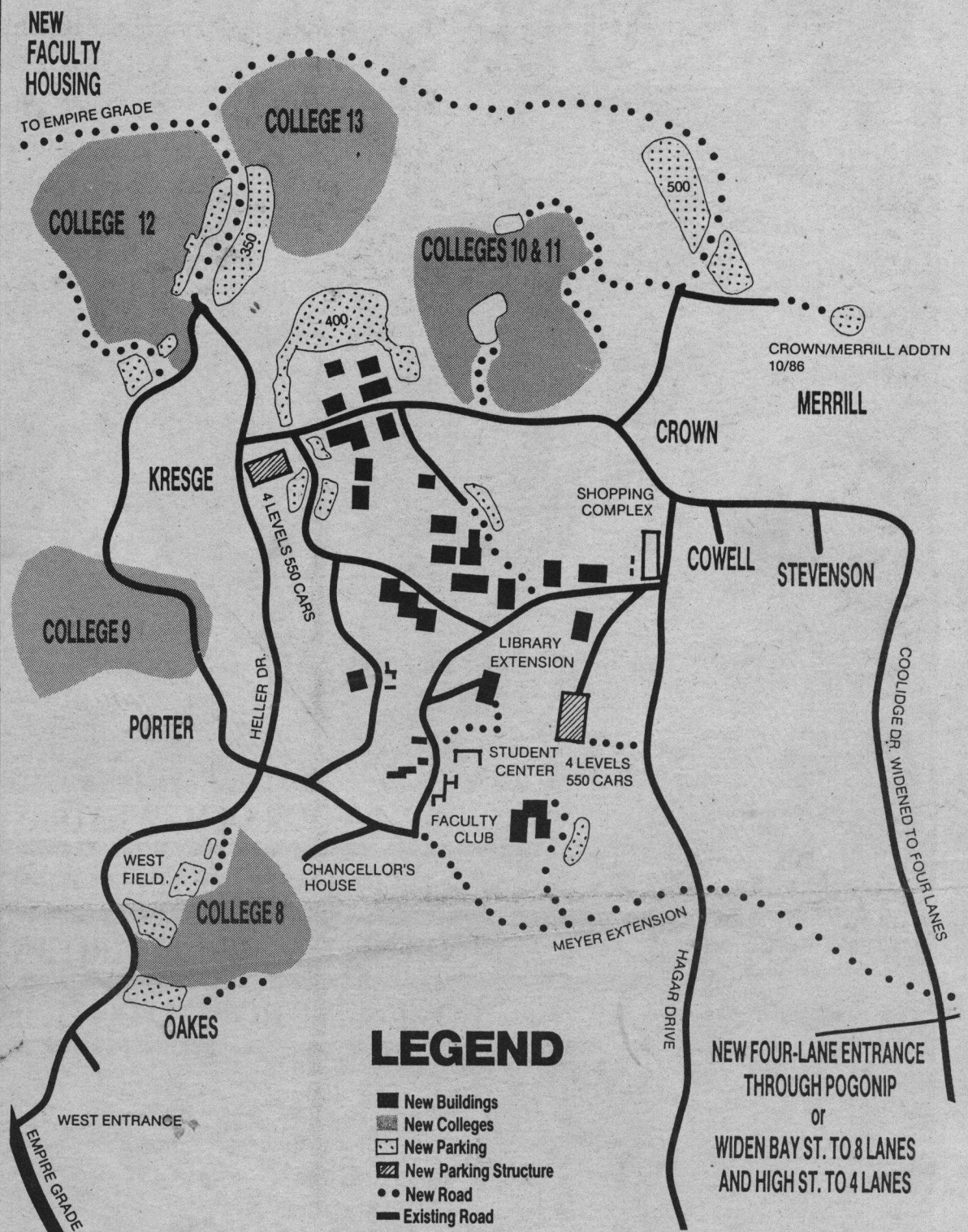
"There is some significant power in this community (to stop growth at UCSC), and we should be aware of it," said Patton. "We're not helpless." •

would be able to house so many students, but if it did, one thing is certain: "It won't come without a cost to land use." In other words, a few redwoods will have to hit the dirt.

"We've got two choices — we've got meadows, and we've got forests," he said. "The buildings are going to have to go somewhere." According to Reed, there's "a somewhat explicit understanding with the city" that no building will take place in the meadowlands.

"I don't mean to be disrespectful, but those meadows are shit meadows," said Reed. "All they are, are areas that have been clear-cut (of redwood trees). Now they've somehow been sanctified as holy, sacred meadows."

Wormhoudt, who didn't recall any understanding that there would be no building in the meadowlands, said it was the university's problem — not



Politics of Paving the Pogonip

OF ALL the development schemes tossed around by the pro-growth university administration, none is more controversial than plans for an eastern access route through the scenic Pogonip property to connect the campus with Highway 9.

While the road itself would only be about a mile long, it would cut through the middle of the most well-loved piece of land in the county, through the nerves of a small army of local environmentalists, and into the political fabric of the community.

The fight against the eastern access to the university promises to make the fight against Wingspread look like a schoolyard scuffle.

Don't expect the "draft" 20-year plan, to be released in two weeks, to show specifics about the infamous roadway through the redwoods. The most the public will see is an indication of a road coming in from the east. Past that, it's still anyone's guess where the road will be — if the road is to be built at all.

That question has been waiting for an answer for 20 years, ever since the (formerly pro-development) county promised the new university it would build an access route to the campus.

Nowhere in that agreement, however, did the county mention *when* it would build the road or *where* it would build it. Since then, the county has apparently changed its mind, but the university has remained committed to the cause as ever.

After tiring of being constantly rebuffed by the county in its attempts to get an environmental impact study — the first step toward development — the university set about doing a study of its own.

UCSC public relations director Steve Reed said the university is looking at all ways to lessen traffic problems in west Santa Cruz caused by the university, but reality continues to point a finger at an eastern access road as the only realistic pressure valve.

What has the university learned so far? "There are a series of routes that are at least plausible, probably feasible, and should be studied and considered on their merits," said Reed. "But the county is reluctant to do so. The county is not convinced the campus needs an eastern access. That's fine for them: the county isn't receiving the impacts, the city is."

(continued on page 12)

'If a road is gouged through the Pogonip, the effect environmentally would be devastating. I don't think it's a solution acceptable to our community'

— Gary Patton

(continued from page 11)

What those impacts may be

City councilmember Mardi Wormhoudt said she is very concerned about traffic congestion on the west side, but she is not convinced that an eastern access route would solve the problem.

The most vocal critic of the eastern access road is county supervisor Gary Patton, who has made his position clear for years, a position that has helped keep him in office for three terms.

"If a road is gouged through those slopes, the effect environmentally would be devastating," said Patton. "The university chose to build in a place that does not accommodate an eastern access. I just don't think it's a solution acceptable to our community."

While Patton acknowledges the "rather indefinite statement" made about building a road, he passed it off as the actions of people who didn't really think about what they were promising. "They just assumed, with typical American bravado, that because they could write it down on a piece of paper, it could become real."

In addition to the road, Patton worries that "massive development" would immediately follow. Reed acknowledged that the road, through no design of the university, could be used to further development in Pogonip.

Stephanie Hauk plays the unenviable role as referee between the university and the county. The consultant hired by the Cowell Foundation (owners of the 614-acre Pogonip property) gathers community sentiment on how the land should be developed. Although Hauk agrees with Reed that Cowell is "friendly to the university's cause," she said that does not mean the road — and certainly not development surrounding the road — is inevitable.

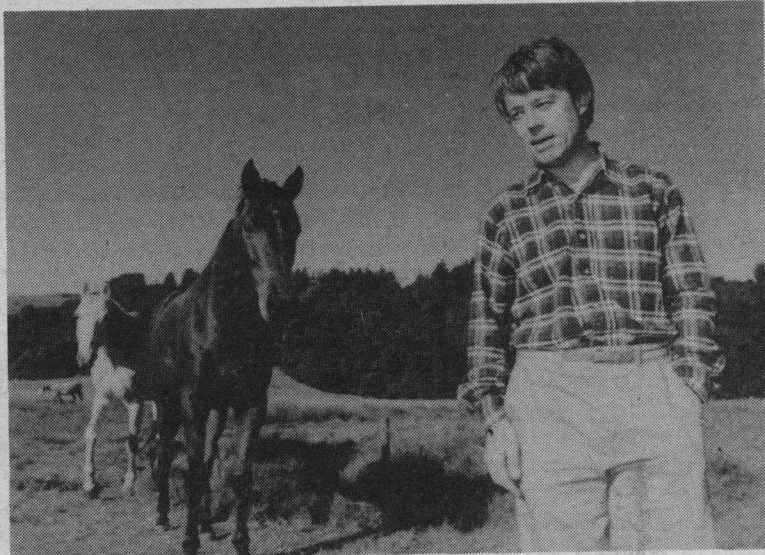
"Certainly there was an understanding by Cowell (when the university was built on Cowell land) that there would be another entrance," said Hauk. "It's clear that Cowell is open to that. Obviously, that has to be considered in any planning that we do."

Regardless of the decision on the road itself, Hauk strenuously denied that the road would automatically lead to development. If Hauk's committee of community members says there will be no development tied to the road, there will be no development, she said.

"The committee's purpose is to plan for the property and to plan for ways to preserve it," said Hauk, who added that 100 acres, at most, would be developed. "If the committee does what it's supposed to do, then no, the eastern access will not be growth-inducing, because there will be nowhere to grow." •

—Sam Mitchell

GREG PIO



Patton: "I personally think the university community should rethink the idea that in education, bigger is better"