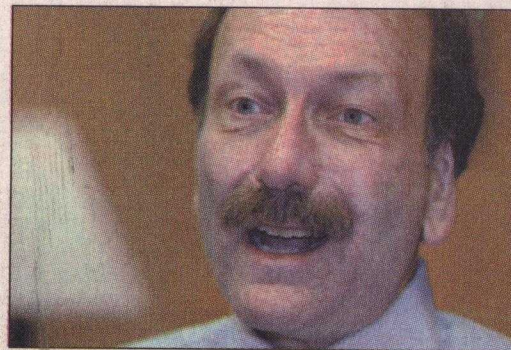


# The man atop city on the hill



## ACTING CHANCELLOR SPEAKS ON FUTURE OF UCSC, PROTESTS, TOWN-GOWN ISSUES

UCSC - Faculty

By **ROGER SIDEMAN**

SENTINEL STAFF WRITER

2.18.07

George Blumenthal, who became interim chancellor of UC Santa Cruz in July, is a theoretical astrophysicist accustomed to studying the origin of the universe. But his head is hardly stuck in the stars.

In his 35 years since arriving at UCSC, Blumenthal has stood out as a leader in faculty government and earned a reputation for openness, sincerity and being a good listener.

Over the past six months, he has won over many members of faculty, and even local elected officials despite his support for UCSC's controversial plans to grow by as many as 4,500 students by 2020.

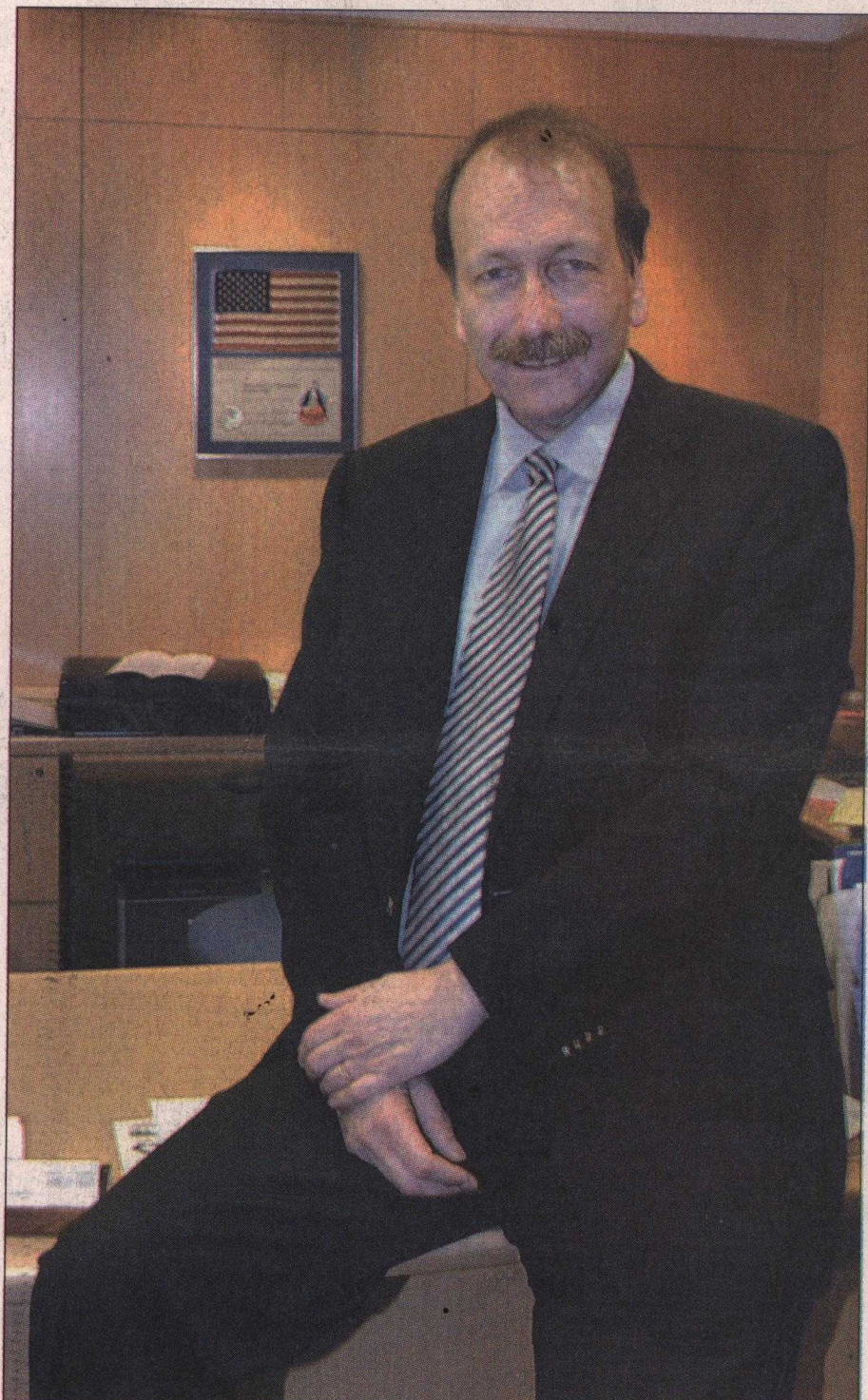
"We don't always agree with George, but we've been impressed with his directness," said longtime City Councilman and UCSC lecturer Mike Rotkin, who fondly remembers Blumenthal playing a helpful role during union bargaining with the UC Regents.

A 15-member search committee will form next month to find a new chancellor and Blumenthal's name will be in the running with hundreds of applicants from around the country. The final decision rests with UC President Robert Dynes, who had appointed Blumenthal to the interim position.

Blumenthal has yet to announce whether he would take the position if offered.

To his advantage, Blumenthal shares a science background like his predecessors, M.R.C. Greenwood and Denice Denton. But he lacks their prodigious track record in fundraising.

Interviewed in his office last week, Blumenthal talked about taking the job in the wake of Denton's suicide in June, the town-gown conflict and his approach to issues at the campus.



See **BLUMENTHAL** on **PAGE A12**

Dan Coyro/Sentinel photos

*'UC has an obligation to have a diversity in the student body which reflects the diversity of the state, an obligation that it frankly has not met.'*

**GEORGE BLUMENTHAL, ACTING CHANCELLOR**



# Blumenthal

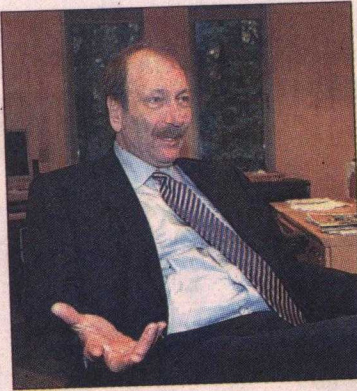
Continued from Page A1

**Q** You came into the job at a time when the campus was shocked by the sudden death of former Chancellor Denise Denton. What was that like?

**A** It's hard to go through a transition even in the best of times. Obviously, it was an enormously painful experience for the campus to go through what we did when Denise died. There were a number of issues that I had to deal with: people's feelings, making sure we could get them into a situation where we could come together and move on.

**Q** Did you feel prepared to take the reins?

**A** The truth is, the rumors started flying immediately after she died about who would be named acting chancellor. I didn't have a lot of time to think about it. I only had time to think about whether I wanted it. I really have a lot of affection for this campus and think it deserves leadership. So I felt there was something I could bring to the job, particularly in view of my



*'In theory, the lawsuits could last for years but I don't think they will.'*

involves art, engineering and information science as well as bioinformatics are good examples of new, nontraditional areas where we can really make a difference. We're also looking at developing graduate schools in applied finance and business as well as some new professional schools. The Silicon Valley Center is moving forward with

**A** Yes. But I think we can always do better. There will be a day when there are no lawsuits between the city and the university. Once the litigation is behind us, we need to work very hard on setting up mechanisms to prevent these kinds of lawsuits from ever coming up. There used to be quarterly meetings between the city and the chancellor and they didn't work; some of the potentially difficult issues just weren't discussed because it was just too public. I also think we need the university staff and the city staff to communicate at the nitty-gritty level because the staffs know the issues and the solutions better than I do as the chancellor.

**Q** As early as 2003, it was looking like the university's Long-Range Development Plan was going to cause town-gown friction over impacts on city traffic, housing costs and water supplies. Was this on your radar back then?

**A** I was actually involved very early in getting the process going. In 2002, I actually encouraged M.R.C. Greenwood to be thinking about the growth of the campus and do a new Long-Range Development Plan. I



Dan Coyro/Sentinel photos

George Blumenthal watches students protest the UC Regents' October visit to campus. The acting chancellor said he once led an anti-war protest in San Diego when he was a student at UC San Diego.

the cause of diversity if we increase the number of transfers.

Despite some opposition, I convinced the regents to lower our enrollment ceiling from 21,000 to 19,500. But it's important to remember that even this lower number is not a mandate to increase our student numbers by 4,500 over the next 15 years. We may not ever reach an enrollment of 19,500; but we want

**Q** Will the litigation drag on?

**A** In theory, the [Clean Water Act] lawsuits could last for years but I don't think they will. Most of the lawsuits are over the [California Environmental Quality Act] and those get decided pretty fast. Let me quote [Santa Cruz City Manager] Dick Wilson, who is my mentor on CEQA litigation: "you can't ever

## George R. Blumenthal

**AGE:** 61.

**OCCUPATION:** Acting chancellor of UC Santa Cruz.

**BIRTHPLACE:** Milwaukee.

**CURRENT RESIDENCE:** Monte Sereno, just outside Los Gatos.

**FAMILY:** Wife Kelly Weisberg is a professor of law at UC Hastings College of the Law in San Francisco; two teenage 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.

**LAST BOOK READ:** 'The Da Vinci Code' by Dan Brown.

**FAVORITE MUSIC:** Classical.

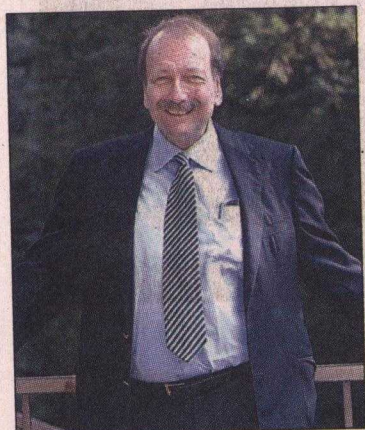
**FAVORITE PLACE IN SANTA CRUZ:** The trails in the redwoods in the upper part of campus.

**FAVORITE SCIENTIST:** Albert



after she then about who would be named acting chancellor. I didn't have a lot of time to think about it. I only had time to think about whether I wanted it. I really have a lot of affection for this campus and think it deserves leadership. So I felt there was something I could bring to the job, particularly in view of my background as chair of the local and systemwide Academic Senates, and experience on the Board of Regents as faculty representative.

The other thing I thought we really needed on campus from the beginning was a visible chancellor. So I have put in and will continue to put in a lot of time outside the four walls of this office, meeting with students, community leaders, faculty and staff, donors, neighborhood groups, you name it.



*'I don't think it's necessarily a goal to be a UCLA or Berkeley.'*

**Q** Anytime a new chancellor takes over, everyone wonders whether there will be a new direction on campus. What questions about the future have you been hearing from members of the campus and community?

**A** The main answer is we're finishing up with a new academic plan. The main change is that we are going to concentrate on interdisciplinary developments — to look to make better use of our resources, leveraging them by putting them in places that are ripe for developing between departments. Digital arts, which

bioinformatics are good examples of new, nontraditional areas where we can really make a difference. We're also looking at developing graduate schools in applied finance and business as well as some new professional schools. The Silicon Valley Center is moving forward with courses, including summer courses, research, a new university-industry collaboration on bio-, info- and nano-technology, and quite possibly, a new school of business management.

**Q** Several departments at UCSC are nationally recognized, yet the university's reputation still lags within the UC system. What does UCSC need to move higher in the UC ranks?

**A** I don't think it's necessarily a goal to be a UCLA or Berkeley. We want other campuses to be more like us. This campus has been extremely successful at fostering interdisciplinary work where, for example, more than one department can benefit from a single faculty hire. Working in areas between departments allows us to get into new fields. The classic example here is bioinformatics where, in fact, we were the place that produced the final draft of the human genome.

Also, how the campus is perceived depends sometimes on a long history and often is the case that perceptions of the campus lag behind reality. I think there is a lag. Part of my job is to be ambassador of this campus, to try to decrease that lag.

**Q** UC Santa Cruz has been known as a mecca within the UC system for undergraduate education. Can this emphasis continue with increasing emphasis on graduate-level research?

**A** Yes, I believe it can and will. In terms of grad student emphasis, we are now at 9 [percent] and our goal on campus is 15 percent. Let's put that into context. Berkeley is currently at 25 percent graduate students, and they think that's way too low. By going to just 15 percent, we will still maintain a unique difference with Berkeley.

**Q** Would you say relations with the city have improved since you took over?

costs and water supplies. Was this on your radar back then?

**A** I was actually involved very early in getting the process going. In 2002, I actually encouraged M.R.C. Greenwood to be thinking about the growth of the campus and do a new Long-Range Development Plan. I saw that we'd be getting to 15,000 students in a few years, and I realized we needed to think about what we wanted to do as a campus. Do we want to expand graduate and undergraduate enrollments? What about professional schools?

However, after I left for Oakland in 2003 to assume my duties with the UC systemwide Academic Senate, I did not follow the progress of the LRDP discussions on campus and in the community closely. When I returned to campus two years later, I was greatly saddened by the wide gulf that had developed between campus and community leaders on the issue of campus growth.

**Q** At least one current lawsuit against the university challenges how the decision was made to expand enrollment limits from 15,000 to 19,500. Do the neighborhood groups behind the suit have a point in light of recent projections showing the number of California's graduating high school seniors is set to decline over the next several years?

**A** UC would be remiss in its duty to the state of California if we set all long-range plans to equal enrollment projections because if those enrollment projections were wrong, and underestimate the demand, then we wouldn't have room. Secondly, you cannot assume that demographics of high school graduations is going to determine who will apply to the university. Other factors, such as the economy, play a major role in determining UC attendance. If we just kept undergraduate enrollment level, we would still want to get graduate enrollment up. Lastly, over the next few years there will be increasing pressure to increase the number of transfer students. UC has an obligation to have a diversity in the student body which reflects the diversity of the state, an obligation that it frankly has not met. We will be advancing

years but I don't think they will. Most of the lawsuits are over the [California Environmental Quality Act] and those get decided pretty fast. Let me quote [Santa Cruz City Manager] Dick Wilson, who is my mentor on CEQA litigation, "you can't ever win these lawsuits because when you win, you really lose: All they do is delay something by requiring a new environmental impact report." It's only a delaying tactic — it's much better to work out differences.

**Q** Why did you choose to go ahead with Biomedical Sciences Facility when there were these outstanding lawsuits and the threat of more to come over this project? [Two suits seeking to halt construction were filed Thursday, after this interview was conducted.]

**A** It isn't as though we did nothing. We did an environmental study that was 100-some-odd pages long and also had a comment period where many letters were responded to point-by-point.

The environmental analysis for that building was really quite significant. We could have done a full EIR [environmental impact report]. My goal was to get that building through as quickly as possible for several reasons, the most important of which is just plain money. Every month we delay that building, the price tag goes up.

years but I don't think they will. Most of the lawsuits are over the [California Environmental Quality Act] and those get decided pretty fast. Let me quote [Santa Cruz City Manager] Dick Wilson, who is my mentor on CEQA litigation, "you can't ever win these lawsuits because when you win, you really lose: All they do is delay something by requiring a new environmental impact report." It's only a delaying tactic — it's much better to work out differences.

**Q** You canceled a job fair last month out of safety concerns for student protesters and military recruiters. Will it be rescheduled?

**A** We're planning to host another fair this spring.

**Q** Students and police have clashed at past protests and vowed to bar the military from recruiting students at any cost. What will change this time from where you stand?

**A** We're trying to develop a campus policy so that we don't act in an ad hoc fashion. By the spring fair, we should have developed measured but appropriate responses to demonstrations that get out of hand.

**LAST BOOK READ:** 'The Da Vinci Code' by Dan Brown.

**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.

**Q** What first attracted you to UCSC and why have you stayed all these years?

**A** I was really attracted to an outstanding astronomy department and by the potential to be part of a campus that was developing in a fascinating new way both physically and in terms of its delivery of undergraduate education. The reason I've stayed is because I've actually been very proud to be a part of the development of the campus. I've benefited enormously by being able to teach the kind of interesting students we have at UCSC, and the research environment and collaborations available here have been key contributors to the quality and impact of my own research.

Contact Roger Sideman at  
rsideman@santacruzsentinel.com.