

UCSC Visitors Are Not Made Welcome

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Michael Rotkin, a lecturer in UCSC's Community Studies program, tells people that his office is in Merrill College, Room 6.

From downtown Santa Cruz, a visitor would drive two miles to the college to keep an appointment with Rotkin.

Upon arrival, the visitor probably couldn't find a place to park near Merrill College.

The visitor might then drive down the hill from Merrill to Stevenson, to find all the spaces there also occupied.

The hapless visitor, confronted with the choice of parking illegally at Stevenson and climbing up the hill to Merrill, or parking illegally at Merrill, would probably pick the latter option.

Already late for the appointment, the visitor would next face the daunting challenge of finding Rotkin's office.

Merrill's faculty office building, hidden behind several other one- and two-story edifices, is a multiple-level, stairway-filled labyrinth whose rooms, notes Rotkin, "are numbered in a bizarre way."

Finding Rotkin's office or giving up, the visitor, upon leaving, would probably find a parking ticket on the car windshield. If parking spaces are in short supply on the campus, meter maids are not.

UCSC's inaccessibility has contributed significantly to its rift with Santa Cruz.

The campus' meandering layout atop a hill lush with redwood trees, overlooking the Pacific, gives it an awesome beauty.

But it discourages those who might like to go to lectures, films, plays, art exhibits and other events campus officials wish the public would attend.

"It was not built to include outsiders," noted Rotkin.

It was built as a group of residential colleges, modeled after Oxford and Cambridge. Class sizes were to be small and students were to steep themselves in a secluded atmosphere of learning.

Santa Cruz residents felt excluded from the campus, first, by a perceived "snooty" attitude.

Most faculty members, observed Sentinel Editor Gordon Sinclair, "simply haven't integrated into the community despite the fact that some have played

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roles on the planning commission and in the arts.

"They have not become community-minded to any significant degree or, when they did, it didn't last long," said Sinclair, one of the most enthusiastic advocates in the 1960s of situating the proposed University of California campus in Santa Cruz.

"With lots of exceptions, the faculty has tended toward isolation. They've gone into a cocoon."

A second campus feature that has dissuaded people from visiting the campus is its design.

"The campus' inaccessibility to outsiders," Sinclair continued, "is one of the things that has hindered, and to a fairly serious degree, the ability to enhance town-gown relations."

Whereas such institutions as libraries can attract community members to a university, McHenry Library's obscure location, inconvenient access road and

sparse parking discourage those who would otherwise be drawn by its extensive Santa Cruz history and other collections.

To reach the handful of parking spaces near the library (which are nearly always taken) motorists must drive down a short, one-lane road that only accommodates vehicles going in one direction at a time.

In reply to those who ridicule campus planners for designing such a tiny, awkward entrance to the main library on a 2,000-acre campus, UCSC officials explain they made the road small so as not to disturb the environment.

Another institution that habitually

draws a community to a university in its midst — a sports stadium — is also missing from UCSC.

The campus has no outdoor stadium, and its two field houses have no seating for spectators.

(Larger facilities have not been considered necessary since UCSC has only a fledgling intercollegiate sports program.)

Aside from the campus' inaccessibility, its sheer distance from town has contributed to the university-community rift.

"We did not envision the campus being a mile away from the community," said Sinclair.

"This (town-gown split) probably would not have occurred if we had a small village or community on the border where students went for haircuts and for beer — a common place of association bordering campus.

"If the campus were three-quarters of a mile closer to town, I don't think we'd have the problem. I think the biggest single problem is that there's no place for association.

"The planners made a big mistake," Sinclair said. "They got carried away with aesthetics and forgot the common things that people appreciate."

