

# UCSC's Newspaper: News, Opinion Or Mirror Of Campus Life?

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Sentinel Staff Writer

About 15 people were gathered around the room whose windows were barred, smoking cigarettes and expressing left-wing ideas.

They were not a group of incarcerated radicals, jailed for terrorist acts. They were the staff of Santa Cruz' oldest weekly newspaper, "City on a Hill."

The UCSC student paper's newsroom is in a building constructed in 1866 to store dynamite for use in the Cowell Ranch's limestone quarry. The windows were barred to prevent thieves from stealing the explosives.

But, explosive material escapes from the building nowadays, some would say, in the newspaper's columns.

Some critics claim the publication leans further to the left than the average UCSC student, who has gained a reputation as politically liberal.

"It's not news, it's opinion," reacted one professor, who wished to remain anonymous, when asked about City on a Hill.

"There's a modicum of news," he added to qualify his response.

"It's definitely more to the left than the average student," said a young, blue-jean and back-pack clad

man, who looked like an average student.

Another student, community studies major Dwight Johnson, said the paper mirrors the campus community.

"It is representative," Johnson said.

"It has a similar political perspective to that of the students — liberal to leftist."

The newspaper's staff generally agree with this viewpoint.

"If there is a slant," reflected editor-in-chief Ann Scott Knight, "it is directed to what is of interest to the students."

Other critics maintain that a student newspaper should not have a political slant.

Former Board of Supervisors' chairwoman Marilyn Liddicoat received apologies from the paper's editor, UCSC's chancellor and the university's president after the paper ran a cover photograph showing her as a target in the crosshairs of a rifle scope.

Liddicoat labels City on a Hill "a far-left, liberal newspaper that doesn't embody thinking on both sides of the political spectrum."

"It does more to destroy town-gown relationships than any other entity.

"It ridicules the people that the administration is trying to court."

Editors court the staff's opinions in a democratic fashion in setting most policies. When a Sentinel reporter asked to interview Knight, she suggested that a number of staff be present since they have so much power in making decisions.

So about 15 staff members congregated in the newsroom on one recent day, sitting on chairs, leaning on tables under shelves stacked with back issues of National Geographic and slumping on a dilapidated couch.

In its messiness, beat-up furniture and abundance of instant coffee jars, the newsroom resembles those of other newspapers.

The staff resembles other students except that they, in a journalistic tradition, smoke a lot of cigarettes.

Another journalistic tradition they claim to follow is spending a goodly amount of time at the local bar.

The entire 65-person staff, except the business and advertising managers, who are UCSC graduates, are students.

Some workers are paid \$5.09 per hour; many volunteer.

The staff elects the editors, and, unlike most newspapers, reporters help decide which stories will be included in the paper and how they

will be treated.

"On Monday, we select copy in a democratic way" for Thursday's paper, Knight explained. "There is no editorial board."

Most of the copy concerns campus issues. In a recent edition, a campus performance by choreographer and dancer Donald Byrd is the tabloid's cover story.

Other stories are about a proposal to change UCSC's grading system, termination of the Native American Studies program, vandalism and Daniel Ellsberg's speech on campus.

The paper runs a campus calendar of events, classified ads, an entertainment section, and it devotes a substantial number of pages to women's issues.

Although editors maintain they try to be fair, and present each side of an issue, the paper's tone is decidedly to the left of "establishment" papers.

Many tones appear, however, in the letters-to-the-editor column and in unsolicited editorials.

Even racist, sexist and militaristic views are printed in opinion columns if the articles present cogent arguments and are well written, according to the staff. About eight of every 10 unsolicited editorials are printed, they say.

Outside of editorials and letters columns, what they consider militaristic, sexist and racist material is deleted.

"The policy," according to Knight, "is that if it's terribly written or inaccurate, we won't accept it."

"If it's blatantly exploitative, there's not a good chance of it getting in."

These editorial policies are more independent than those of establishment newspapers, editors maintain, because staff, not advertisers, set policy.

"The mainstream press has to deal with a commercial base and its editorial policies usually reflect that," commented staff writer Irene Moosen.

However, about 80 percent of the paper's \$110,000 annual budget comes from advertising. The rest is from student registration fees.

The staff performs all of the production on campus, except for making plates and printing, which is done by a firm in Cupertino.

Students are the paper's primary audience, Young noted, and the paper's chief purpose is to serve the university community. But, the publication also prints news of general interest to residents of Santa Cruz, where 50 percent of City on a Hill circulates.

However, many students pick up papers in town.

"I sometimes think the reason we're successful (10,000 circulation) is that we represent the campus community," staff writer Stuart Leavenworth reflected.

"If our views were very different from that of the campus community, I don't think we'd survive."

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