



"I WILL PROUDLY WORK WITH THE CAMPUS COMMUNITY, OUR ACCOMPLISHED ALUMNI, AND THE MANY COMMUNITIES WE SERVE TO CONTINUE UCSC'S UPWARD TRAJECTORY?"

—GEORGE BLUMENTHAL

Quit Acting

George Blumenthal ascends to the chancellorship of UCSC | BY PETER KOHT

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Placing his inquiries into "the origin of structure in the universe such as galaxies and clusters of galaxies" on the back burner a little longer, George Blumenthal took on the mantle of the chancellorship of UC Santa Cruz on Sept. 19. Serving in the position for the last 14 months, he is now able to drop the "acting" from his title.

The regents formally appointed Blumenthal chancellor during their meeting at the Mondavi Center on the campus of UC Davis. Blumenthal's appointment has been met with that rarest of commodities in university-related news—happiness.

"I was extremely pleased when I heard the news," says Ceil Cirillo. "After developing a working relationship with the chancellor in his acting position, I felt the entire community—including the university—would benefit by his appointment."

The executive director of the city's Redevelopment Agency, Cirillo has been working closely with UCSC on several collaborative efforts, including the Westside Technology Transfer Project, which will eventually serve as an economic incubator for UC research in the former Wrigley Factory on Mission St. Extension. She believes that Blumenthal's permanent appointment will help to move projects to completion more quickly. "We won't have to go through a whole learning process with someone unfamiliar with the collaborative efforts we have been working on," she says. "To start over with someone new, in my opinion, results in losing ground on the opportunities we have jointly identified."

The top brass at the UC system echoed Cirillo's joy. "In naming George Blumenthal to this important position, we are choosing a person who has contributed significantly to UCSC's richly deserved reputation for

producing world-class research and student-focused instruction," outgoing UC President Robert Dynes wrote in a statement released in concert with the appointment. "George Blumenthal's thoughtful, collegial and constructive leadership style will solidify UCSC's stature as one of the premier research universities in the nation."

Continuing with UCSC's efforts to expand professional and graduate school capacity while shoring up the physical infrastructure of the campus, and augment enrollment from its present figure of 15,000 to 19,500 in the next 15 years, Blumenthal will have the opportunity to act as a mediator between the needs of the statewide UC system and the complaints of a region that doesn't suffer growth—or its negative effects—quietly. Despite the polarizing nature of his position, Blumenthal has been repeatedly praised for his efforts at engagement. UC staff, faculty and local officials all lobbied on his behalf during the search process for a chancellor.

Some stakeholders were concerned that this level of popularity might work against his permanent appointment. "I signed that petition that went around the faculty supporting his candidacy during this whole period," says city councilmember and Community Studies faculty member Mike Rotkin. "But there was some concern that if the faculty and the community pressed the regents too hard, that they wouldn't appoint him, because he might give away the store. Of course that isn't going to happen."

Blumenthal, who's already faced numerous problems in his tenure as acting chancellor, will face no letup in his schedule now. In August, portions of the University's EIR for its Long Range Development Plan (LRDP) were decertified by Judge Paul Burdick in Superior Court. Claiming that the environmental review was flawed in three areas, housing, transportation and water planning, that ruling, and the appeals process it might spark, will hold up several important construction projects including a new Biomedical Science Facility.

The LRDP problems don't stop there. In the wake of Burdick's decision, the campus has taken the rare

step of criticizing the planned expansion of Safeway on Mission Street—a move that's been met with derision by many city staffers. That issue will be settled before the city council in October.

Earlier this year, following a procedural error by city hall, university lawyers were able to invalidate the adoption of Measures I and J, which would make it more difficult for the university to pursue its developmental ambitions prolonging yet another process thread in the complicated relationship between town and gown.

Last January in a sit-down interview with *GT*, Blumenthal addressed these issues by saying, "There are disputes and I recognize that the concerns that are expressed are real concerns. People are concerned about the effects on UCSC for the environment and quality of life. I am not at all hostile to those concerns. To the extent that there are disputes, those are disputes between local and statewide concerns. Yes, there are lawsuits and there will be some more before we are done, but I believe discussing the issue will help us resolve our differences. If you go through litigation, there will be winners and losers but no one is going to be totally happy with the results. We should be talking about mitigation of growth not litigation."

Cirillo is convinced of the acting chancellor's commitment to conversation. "I believe the chancellor appreciates the value of mediation," she says. "However, it remains to be seen how this litigation process can be resolved. I am hopeful that it can be so that we can continue working together cooperatively on our economic development initiatives."

Now that Blumenthal is no longer acting in an interim capacity, many local residents are hopeful that he can take even more of a leadership role in the complicated negotiations that lie ahead. When asked about this, Rotkin says, "He'll have more authority, that's for sure, but it's not like he's been sitting on his hands so far. He'll definitely have more, but for many things, the system will still be worried about setting a precedent on some items, so it's taken out of the local chancellor's hand and goes to either counsel or the Office of the President.

"I don't think that we [the city] are operating under the illusion that he now has total authority to solve all our problems," Rotkin continues. "But it's very good news that he was appointed. He's a very good listener and he's honest and straightforward. When he has concerns he shares them and he doesn't stonewall. I'm very happy that we won't have to start from scratch and that we already have a good basis for working on our problems."

For his part, Blumenthal expresses deep appreciation to the campus for its support for his permanent chancellorship. "I am deeply honored by this appointment to lead a campus so distinctive and effective in fulfilling its mission," Blumenthal wrote upon accepting the appointment from the Regents. "UCSC has a bold vision and superb programs. Our students are outstanding, and our faculty is exceptional scholars committed to giving students uncommon learning and research opportunities. I will proudly work with the campus community, our accomplished alumni, and the many communities we serve to continue UCSC's upward trajectory."