

UCSC eyes heart of high tech

UCSC - Grown
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Santa Cruz campus wants to open center in Santa Clara Valley

BY JOHN WOOLFOLK
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More often linked to the Age of Aquarius than the Information Age, the University of California-Santa Cruz hopes to become the UC campus of Silicon Valley by opening an educational center in Santa Clara County.

The proposed regional center would allow students from the woodsy, laid-back Santa Cruz campus to live and study in the heart of the high-tech revolution. School officials aim to expand on extension courses and research collaborations already in the area and create a powerhouse presence in Silicon Valley.

"We're trying to sharpen our image so that people see us as the institution we are instead of an outdated image," said UC-Santa Cruz Chancellor M.R.C. (pronounced "Marci") Greenwood. "Silicon Valley is a very exciting, very dynamic, very fast-moving environment. You almost have to be there to participate."

University officials have asked the UC Board of Regents to approve \$2.5 million in start-up funding for the project next month and have begun looking at loca-

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SILICON VALLEY UNIVERSITIES

Three of the valley's four-year universities emphasize technology.

■ **San Jose State University:** Claims to be one of the largest suppliers of engineering talent to Silicon Valley.

■ **Santa Clara University:** Named by U.S. News & World Report as the No. 2 regional university in the West.



MERCURY NEWS FILE PHOTOGRAPH
Bill Gates, left, and Stanford President Gerhard Casper outside the Gates Computer Science Building, 1996.

■ **Stanford University:** Graduates Hewlett and Packard struck the spark of Silicon Valley; Yahoo co-founders and Cardinal alums Jerry Yang and David Filo help carry the torch.

UC-Santa Cruz wants to put center in Silicon Valley

Higher high-tech profile is sought

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tions around the valley.

Many in the high-tech industry say that while they have a lot of respect for UC-Santa Cruz, it isn't the first place they think of when looking for new engineers.

"UCSC is an excellent school, but their emphasis isn't typically in subjects we're looking for," said Stacey Cochran, public relations representative for Advanced Micro Devices Inc. There is such demand for technically skilled workers, she said, that a greater UC presence in the area would be welcome.

Exactly what would be offered at the Santa Clara center is still under consideration, university officials said.

Notably, planning is being led by Connie Martinez, formerly vice president of Joint Venture: Silicon Valley Network, the civic organization established to improve the economy and the quality of life in the valley.

The regional center isn't an attempt by UC-Santa Cruz to unseat Stanford as the prestige school of Silicon Valley, school officials said. Rather, they said, their chief interest is in giving UC-Santa Cruz the recognition in Silicon Valley it deserves. Moreover, the new center would help the school accommodate an expected 4,000 more students in the next five years.

Valley visibility

The UC system designates Santa Cruz as the campus for Santa Clara County, and the university already has a considerable presence in the county. UC extension courses in four locations throughout the valley, including the Sun Microsystems campus in Milpitas, offer continuing education for professional and personal development. The university also runs Lick Observatory on Mount Hamilton. And it is engaged in a number of research collaborations in the area, including a study of star clusters with NASA/Ames scientists at Moffett Field.

Despite all that, UC-Santa Cruz is still cruising below Silicon Valley's radar, school officials say.

"I don't think we've been very visible over there," Greenwood said.

pected growth to 15,000 students in the next five years, school officials say.

The regional center would also aid the campus's desire to maintain diversity in the face of a recent ban on affirmative action. The Santa Clara Valley is more racially and ethnically mixed than the Monterey Bay area, Pastor said. Improving student outreach and recruitment there can help UC-Santa Cruz satisfy its diversity goals, he said.

Regional centers are not new in the UC system, but still are uncommon. UC-Santa Barbara has had one in Ventura since 1972, and the newly established University of California-Merced has one in Fresno.

University officials say they don't expect the center to increase revenues. Extension programs are separate and self-supporting, and the campus's attendance levels and budget are determined by the state, said UC-Santa Cruz spokeswoman Liz Irwin.

UC officials said they think there is room for the center to co-exist with Stanford, San Jose State and

Santa Clara universities and the community colleges.

"There's a distinct contribution from all of us," Martinez said. "This is about adding value, not replacing value."

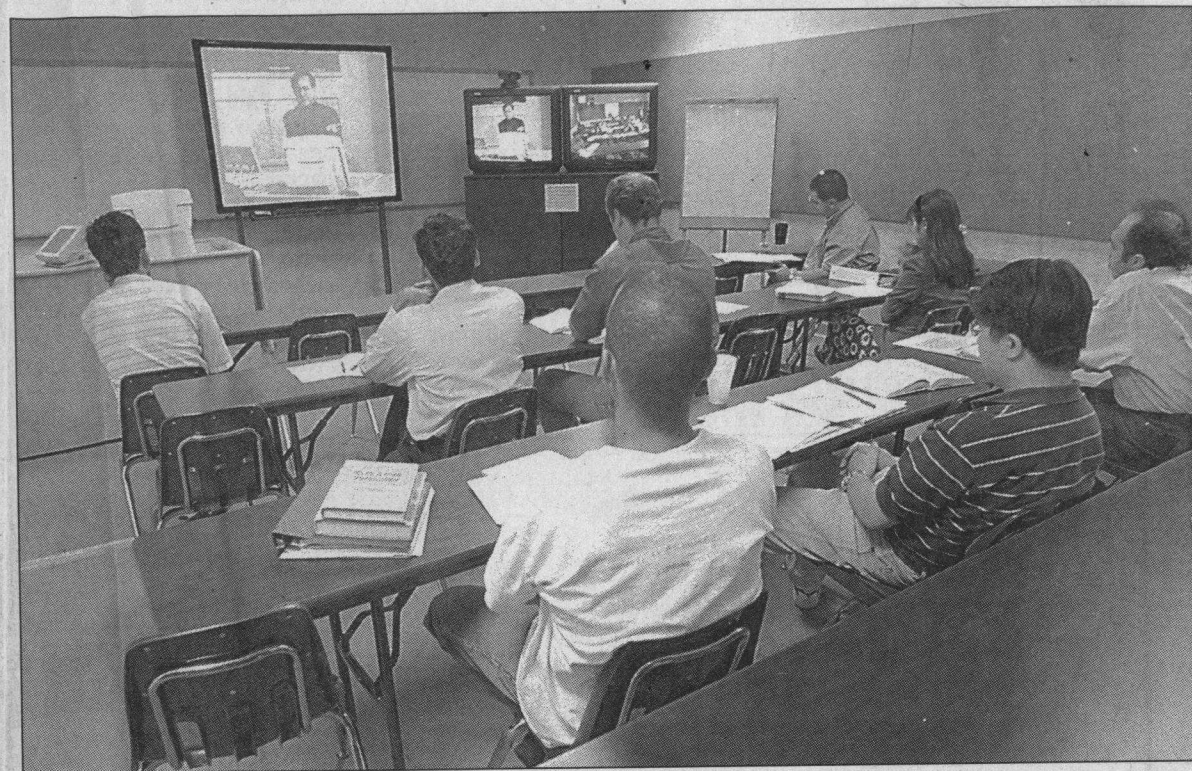
Nabil Ibrahim, associate vice president for graduate studies and research at San Jose State, said his discussions with UC-Santa Cruz about the proposal have been encouraging.

"There obviously is the potential for unnecessary competition," Ibrahim said. "We can complement each other. We hope we can work in a cooperative mode."

Added Santa Clara University spokesman Barry Holtzclaw: "The more the merrier."

"The demand for education and courses related to high tech has increased substantially," he said. "There are a lot of different niches available, and to the extent they add to the mix, it would probably improve things."

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Graduate students study network engineering in a University of California extension class in Cupertino. JUDITH CALSON — MERCURY NEWS

Nestled in the foggy redwoods overlooking Surf City, UC-Santa Cruz seems light-years away from the valley's electronic buzz. Though considered a leader in such fields as marine science and astrophysics, the campus has been more popularly known for its banana slug mascot, frisbee team and aversion to traditional letter grades.

Since coming to UC-Santa Cruz three years ago, Greenwood has shown a keen interest in rounding out the 34-year-old campus's liberal arts image.

"Our image was formed in the crucible of the counterculture moment, and we were cast in that moment," she said. "We're proud of our history and of the fact that some of the forward-looking thinkers of our time were here.

"Sure, we play frisbee here — we're the Ultimate Frisbee champs! But I don't find the students here, and I certainly don't find the faculty here, frivolous. I can tell you we are a serious university."

Technology isn't the only field of study contemplated for the center. Manuel Pastor, who chairs the campus's Latino studies program and helped develop the regional center proposal, said the valley's rich diversity makes it an excellent place for the study of demographics, for example.

University officials aren't calling the proposal a satellite campus, a term they reserve for an autonomous branch. Students won't be able to earn a degree there without ever setting foot in Santa Cruz. But for the first time, undergraduate students could take classes and live in dorms in the bustling valley instead of just at the Santa Cruz campus.

Growing pains

The new center should also help relieve growth pressures. The UC system is mandated to accept the top 12.5 percent of the state's graduating high school seniors, and many of its campuses are having trouble finding room for the growing student horde.

The 11,000-student Santa Cruz campus, among the smallest and youngest in the system, is blessed with a spacious 2,000 acres. But it lies within one of the state's most fervently anti-growth towns. Development and related traffic issues dominate local politics, and UC-Santa Cruz has repeatedly locked horns with city officials over its growth plans.

The university, which already houses about half its students on campus — far more than any other UC campus — is completing two new residential colleges, and plans are in the works for two more. But that won't be enough to handle ex-