

UCSC: New chancellor faced many challenges

12-30-05

EDITOR'S NOTE: This is another installment in a year-end series of stories on the people and events that made headlines in 2005. The series will conclude on Sunday.

By JONDI GUMZ

SENTINEL STAFF WRITER

SANTA CRUZ — Denice Denton, the new chancellor at UC Santa Cruz, started 2005 with a bang and made headlines all year long.

In January — before she officially started work in Santa Cruz — she took Harvard University President Lawrence Summers to task for his remarks on women in science and math careers. The subject is near and dear to Denton, an electrical engineer who earned three degrees at MIT.

She disputed Summers' contention that discrimination may no longer be an obstacle for female scientists and engineers.

Other events in Denton's tumultuous first year included questions about the hiring of her partner, Gretchen Kalonji, the "Tent University" protest and neighbors upset about campus plans to expand enrollment from 15,000 to 21,000



Dan Coyro/Sentinel file

In her tenure at UCSC, Chancellor Denice Denton has been faced with student protests and residents' growth concerns.

students by 2020.

Before the year ended, she turned her inaugural celebration into an opportunity for faculty, students and staff to talk about diversity at UCSC.

Denton has been selected as a 2005 Sentinel newsmaker. She provided written responses about some of the year's events.

■ Students upset by shrinking services and rising fees organized a "Tent University" protest at the edge of campus in April. Denton authorized their arrests

when they tried to camp overnight, and the ensuing resistance and the police's use of force led to a faculty petition opposing disciplinary action against the students. A task force formed to investigate what happened has not yet presented its report.

"There is a group of student, staff and faculty leaders who are committed to working together to ensure that all future student activities are productive

See DENTON on PAGE A5

More Inside

As 2005 newsmakers of the year, three Watsonville residents were successful in putting the city's retirement tax to a vote, worrying city leaders.

PAGE A4

Denton

Continued from Page A1

and peaceful," Denton stated. "Recent riots in France, Australia and Hong Kong are evidence that many of the same issues we face locally are repressions of widespread concerns and perspectives."

■ Faculty upset about the shortage of affordable housing called for a report by Oct. 1 on how the administration planned to meet those needs. Ranch View Terrace, a 45-home development that had been due for completion this year, fell behind schedule once again. In addition, a neighbor group sued the university to prevent sales of on-campus homes to the general public.

Because of schedule conflicts, Denton was unable to speak to the Academic Senate, the faculty governing body, in the fall. Her statement to the Sentinel indicated her position on issues of housing, transportation and other infrastructure "must be addressed through collaborations between UCSC and our community."

■ Neighbors upset about campus plans to expand enrollment from 15,000 to 21,000 students by 2020 and double the amount of building space criticized the environmental impact report as inadequate to deal with the proposed growth. City officials asked for more time to review the three-volume report, citing a manpower shortage.

Denton granted the city's request, extending the deadline from Dec. 19 to 5 p.m. Jan. 11. Comments can be e-mailed to lrdep-ir@ucsc.edu.

Whether that will mean further mitigations is hard to say.

"All of us share concerns for affordable housing, appropriate transportation systems and a vital economy — and these concerns can only be addressed by working together," Denton stated. "Some growth is inevitable as the population of California increases and as the new majority of tomorrow's leaders seek the opportunity for education that many of us have already enjoyed."

In the meantime, Denton indicated she will push her agenda on diversity.

A survey on campus climate by faculty leaders, combined with the discussions in November and December, will serve as a springboard for an action plan on diversity.

More information about the incoming freshman class will be available in January.

"As it is, approximately one-third of the total UCSC student enrollment comprises people of color," Denton's statement said. "That does not mirror our society, so investment in efforts to improve access for currently underrepresented groups is essential."

Diversity of ideas is another priority for Denton. She wants to schedule open forums on the issue, with the goal of fostering an environment in which everyone feels safe to express their opinions and beliefs.

A study released in March found 72 percent of those teaching at American universities and colleges are liberal and 15 percent are conservative. At UCSC, some faculty and staff say it's difficult to present their views on Israel and on Christianity because they are in the minority.

Denton indicated she shares the view of Shirley Jackson, president of Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute and guest speaker at Denton's inaugural weekend: "Diversity and discussions of it can be turbulent and uncomfortable. But it also is clarifying, illuminating, leading to a deeper understanding of one's self and one's world."