



Pete Amos/Sentinel

Student Samantha Sommer with Banana Slug shirt.

## UCSC students win mascot slug-fest

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SANTA CRUZ — It was a long, slow and slimy road but the Banana Slug has triumphed at UC Santa Cruz to become the official mascot of the school's athletic teams.

Chancellor Robert Sinsheimer, reversing himself after five years of opposition, decided Tuesday to accede to student demands and change the name of the teams from Sea Lions to Banana Slugs.

The change culminates years of student attempts to have the popular yellow, snail-like creature represent the school. The Banana Slug has been the de facto mascot of the school for students, even when Sinsheimer decided to name the school teams the Sea Lions in 1981.

The decision means that about 300 men and women athletes will be known as the Banana Slugs, thereby legitimizing the creature's presence on campus.

Dan Wood, UCSC director of physical education, said he and the athletes are overwhelmingly in favor of the use of the slug as

the mascot, although it was unclear whether they would be rounding up some of the mascots to have on hand at sporting events.

"I think it's kind of a unique mascot. It's going to be a lot of fun and with no derogatory comments," Wood said. Around campus, there is already a Banana Slug handshake, where you shake hands and "then sort of wipe the slime off," Wood said.

He said the soccer team and the fencing teams already have the slug emblem on their uniforms and that soon they will be joined by the basketball, volleyball, cross-country, tennis and sailing teams. There are numerous sports clubs on campus that also will use the Banana Slug name.

The slug fest began when UCSC sports teams were granted Division III status with the National Collegiate Athletic Association, which necessitated the use of a nickname.

Until then, students had called the teams the Banana Slugs, a

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sarcastic indication of their distaste for athletics and competition.

Sinsheimer held an election in 1981 to determine the nickname the school wanted from among a list of six, including Banana Slugs.

Although the slugs won, Sinsheimer decided that the name was inappropriate for a sports team and he went with the second choice, Sea Lions.

That touched off a furor as students accused him of being dictatorial and lacking a sense of humor.

As if to disprove this latter point, Sinsheimer released a lighthearted statement Tuesday disclosing his decision to accede to the will of students.

"As is well known, I would prefer a mascot with more spirit and vigor," Sinsheimer wrote. "However, the students are entitled to a mascot they desire and with which they can empathize."

Sinsheimer said the new name would be in effect until students decide to hold another election and change it.

"I also suggest that it would be most desirable for our biological scientists to begin a program of genetic engineering research upon the slug 'to improve the breed.' The potential seems endless," Sinsheimer said in his statement. "Viva le (and/or la) slug! Watch for the SLUGFESTival."

This came on top of a letter to a San Francisco newspaper Saturday in response to an editorial supporting the Banana Slug.

"Thanks a lot, chaps," Sinsheimer wrote. "How extensive

is your new-found enthusiasm for invertebrates?"

He then went on to suggest that the newspaper change its name to The Daily Slug, that its gossip page be renamed The Slime Beat, and that the "sports page be called, what else?, The Slug-fest and printed on yellow paper."

Students, however, have taken a more serious view of the matter at times, claiming that the Banana Slug issue was symbolic of the school administration's disregard for student wishes.

Last month students voted overwhelmingly again to use the Banana Slug as their symbol.

Prior to the campuswide poll, which held no legal weight, Sinsheimer said he would not change his mind even if students voted to rename the teams.

That changed Tuesday after Sinsheimer held a reception at his home for the school's athletes and they indicated that they would rather be known as the slugs, Wood said.

The director of athletics said the Physical Education Department is still adjusting to the change, although Wood's Banana Slug bumper sticker is ready to go.

He added that there will probably be a contest held to come up with a logo the school can use for team jerseys. Already there has been one suggestion of a Banana Slug in shades.

The new logo also will replace the Sea Lion emblem on the gymnasium floor where the basketball team plays. Wood said in the interim he is leaning toward placing a red circle and slash through the Sea Lion and then show two Banana Slugs crawling on top of that.