

Town-gown meeting draws 400 people in Santa Cruz

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Both sides of the issue of growth at UC-Santa Cruz were out in force at a joint city/university public hearing last night at the Civic Auditorium, but little was said that hadn't been said before.

In the first of what is to be an annual event, more than 400 people came out to listen to or participate in the public discussion about the future of the university.

University enrollment is expected to grow to between 12,000 and 15,000 students by the year 2005 as outlined in the university's 20-Year Plan. Last fall, there were 9,152 students enrolled in the university — an enrollment the university did not expect to reach until 1993, according to its 20-Year Plan.

Chancellor Robert Stevens has called for an enrollment plan in which the university would grow by only about 160 students per year until enrollment falls in line with the levels called for in the 20-Year Plan. However, Stevens has noted that his proposal can be overturned by the president of the university.

And that is the nub of the city's concern, that the university under state law is not bound by city regulations regarding growth. City officials fear that if the university refuses to curtail its growth, the result will be an overwhelming strain on the city's resources.

The university community is itself divided, with many faculty and students supporting the city's call for less growth.

The pressure on the Santa Cruz campus to expand is

intense, however, several university administrators reminded the audience.

Joe Allen, director of admissions at UCSC, said the number of qualified students seeking entrance to the university is growing. For the coming freshman class, he said, UCSC turned away 4,000 eligible students.

Bill Doyle, a biology professor, said the university needs to grow in order to protect itself. In the 1970s, he said, UCSC was one of two UC campuses the system considered closing down for cost-effective reasons.

"We still have not moved out of that area of risk," he said. The university needs to achieve what he called "a critical mass" of students, faculty and staff that would ensure UCSC's place in the UC system.

Others saw it differently.

Ralph Abraham, a professor of mathematics, said, "My experience is that faster rates (of growth) degrade the university in a way that cannot be repaired."

He said great universities evolve over the years rather than being planned. "Would you rather have a great university in 20 years or a mediocre university of the same size in 10 years and for decades after?" he asked rhetorically.

A student speaker also spoke against too much growth, which he said has left students with overcrowded classes, the prospect of being bumped from classes they need to take, packed buses and other drawbacks.

Others pointed to the needs of the community which they said the university should be sensi-

tive to. The university's adverse impacts on housing, water supply, sewage capacity, schools, child-care and traffic were all discussed.

Jack Hillis, a seniors' advocate, said students living off-campus push up housing costs.

"The housing crunch is especially bad for the seniors," he said. "They can't move or find a better paying job because their rent is going up."

Hillis added he was sympathetic to the need to educate those qualifying for a UC education, but he said the answer was to plan a new UC campus.

"There are two million people between San Jose and San Francisco and there hasn't been a new campus built there since Berkeley," he said. "Mother of God, it doesn't make sense."

Deborah Taylor, a member of the Santa Cruz City school board, said all schools in the city system are at capacity, and that growth at the university will make matters worse.

A recent demographic study, she said, showed the city will need two new elementary schools, a junior high school and a senior high school in the next 10 years.

Santa Cruz County Supervisor Gary Patton said growth is good if there are two considerations taken into account.

The first, he said, is that growth has its limits. "Too much growth becomes a cancer," he said.

The second is that growth should occur at a certain rate which he suggested should be slower rather than faster.

"Think about smaller and think about slower," he said.