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UCSC chancellor calls city shortsighted in filing suit

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UC-Santa Cruz Chancellor Robert Stevens said in a press conference yesterday the city of Santa Cruz is undercutting the university's efforts to deal with traffic problems in the community and to provide on-campus housing for its students.

Stevens was speaking of the lawsuit filed in Superior Court yesterday by the city. It alleges the university did not follow the California Environmental Quality Act in its environmental impact report on the future construction of the College 8 facilities.

"Environmentally, it's a sound college," Stevens said. "I believe we've met the law."

The lawsuit has been personally disappointing for him, Stevens said. "As you know, I've been trying really hard to work with both the city and the county," he said.

Although Stevens said he hoped the university would come to some sort of agreement within the 45-day negotiation period specified by law, "we cannot lie down and let steam-rollers move over us."

The big problem, Stevens said, is that the lawsuit could delay the start of construction of the \$20.7 million College 8 facilities for up to a year. That would make everything more expensive — especially the student-housing component of the project, which will add 400 beds.

Stevens countered the city's claim that the College 8 project will lead to general expansion of the university. College 8 has been around for 15 years, he noted, and the students enrolled in it have not had any housing or classroom facilities.

As approved by the University of California Regents last month, the project will mean only that students now living off

campus will have university housing available and that College 8 students will have a central location in which to pursue their studies, he said.

The College 8 project "is really an opportunity for the university to ameliorate impacts on the community."

"We have a commitment to the local people," Stevens said. "While we know we have an obligation to the state, we want to grow with sensitivity."

The chancellor, who took office in July, said he has vowed that the university will hold enrollment steady over the next several years.

He also said he doubted the city's allegation that the EIR does not meet state requirements.

Although Stevens, a lawyer by training, said he had not read the city's suit, he added, "Everyone I have spoken with feels we've more than met the standards in the EIR."