

Student applications drop at UCSC

Minority applicants in particular shy away from local campus

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SANTA CRUZ — Undergraduate applications to UCSC for fall 1996 are down by 2.1 percent from last year, making it the only UC campus to experience a decline.

The drop in UCSC applications comes at a time when a record number of students are seeking admission to UC campuses for the third year in a row.

Various reasons were offered as to why UCSC would buck the trend: the area's high cost of living, difficulty for students to find jobs while attending the somewhat remote campus, lack of some popular majors at the campus, and a chilling effect from the upcoming elimination of affirmative action at all UC campuses.

At UCSC, applications are particularly down among Latino (12.6 percent) and Chicano students (13.8 percent), according to applications received as of Dec. 28 for all campuses by UCSF, which doesn't have an undergraduate program.

However, applications from whites (students who identify themselves as white/Caucasian, East Indian/Pakistani, or other ethnicities) were up just slightly at .5 percent.

The drop in minority applications caused some to blame the regent's recent action eliminating affirmative action.

"There has been a chilling effect from the regents' decision on affirmative action," said Michael Thompson, associate vice chancellor for enrollment management and director of admissions at UCSC. The new policy won't go into effect for undergraduate admissions until spring of 1998, but Thompson said minorities may feel they aren't welcome at UC.

Richard Yoon, the Korean-American president of the Student Union Assem-

bly at UCSC, also pointed a finger at the regents.

"It is sad that the elimination of affirmative action could create such an effect across the state, leaving the impression that minority applicants are not wanted at a UC."

"A UC made up of a majority of whites and Asian Americans does not reflect the diverse demographics of the state," he added.

But if the regents' vote in July eliminating affirmative action in admissions and hiring affected such decisions, then minority applications would be down at each campus.

Overall, minority applications are up 5.9 percent. American Indian applications slipped .1 percent, Chicano applications fell 2.8 percent, and Latino applications stayed the same as last year.

Chicano applications dropped at three of the smaller campuses — UCSC, UC Davis and UC Irvine — while there were increases in applications at larger campuses such as UC Berkeley and UCLA.

Latino applications fell at Irvine, UCSC and UC Santa Barbara.

Applications from American Indians went down at all campuses except UCLA and Santa Barbara. But Thompson said so few American Indians apply to UCSC that any drop appears more significant than it actually is.

The comparatively larger drops in minority applications to UCSC was puzzling to some because the campus has a liberal reputation and a chancellor who has been an outspoken advocate of affirmative action — Karl Pister, who is retiring in June.

Yoon speculated that UCSC may not be doing enough to attract students, including minorities.

"One aspect may be the extent of outreach programs for potential UC applicants and how effective the smaller

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— Michael Thompson,
UCSC associate vice chancellor

campuses are as opposed to Berkeley and UCLA," he said.

Yoon is worried about the California Civil Rights Initiative that backers are attempting to get on the November ballot. It would eliminate all state funding for counseling, tutoring, financial aid and outreach programs aimed at underrepresented groups, he said.

In the meantime, UCSC is beefing up its outreach efforts, Thompson said. The chancellor has established a task force on quality enrollment and retention whose recommendations will be implemented next fall, he said.

Thompson suggested that more may be at work than just the chilling effect from the regents' elimination of affirmative action.

"I think the fact that we are a rural campus does have an impact on the people who apply here. It has to do with the opportunity to work while they are students here," he said.

With many minorities coming from lower-income families, the need to go to school in an area where jobs are plentiful may come into play, he added.

He also noted that studies show that UCSC applicants tend to be more cost conscious than other UC applicants. "The price of education is of greater concern to our students than other students on a national average," he said.

And with the cost of a college educa-

tion on the rise, perhaps students are applying elsewhere where the cost of living is cheaper or jobs are more plentiful.

He agreed that UCSC may not offer some of the majors popular today, like business. But he noted that applications for the computer science program are up by 100 students or 28 percent, and the campus offers computer engineering through an agreement with UC Berkeley.

Thompson said those at UCSC aren't too concerned about the decline in applications. The campus continued to applications through Feb. 9, past the official UC deadline.

"In Fall 1994, we received 14,536 and we will probably get there. We have more frosh applications already than Fall '94 and more than Fall '93. So when we say there is a downturn, it is a relatively insignificant number.

"But I appreciate that when you look at other campuses, it is counter the trend," he said.

Out of 14,411 applications, 3,000 students will be admitted, Thompson said. Students can apply to as many UC campuses as they wish, so campuses get many more applications than they need.

The job ahead, he said, is to convince 3,000 students — including minorities — to come to UCSC.