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UCSC chancellor confirms plans to speed enrollment

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UC-Santa Cruz Chancellor Robert Stevens has confirmed reports that he will recommend an accelerated enrollment-growth schedule for the campus to the year 2005.

Originally, Stevens' proposals had called for a growth of 180 students per year for the next six years. But yesterday, Stevens — as had been anticipated by city officials — confirmed that his recommendation will be changed to call for the admission of an extra 255 students this fall, 300 in the fall of 1990, and 400 a year after that until 2001, when enrollment would be tapered back to 180 annually by 2005.

That would bring the total enrollment in the year 2005 to 15,000 students.

Santa Cruz Mayor John Laird and other city officials have already strongly protested the plans for accelerated growth on

the Santa Cruz campus. But Stephanie Hauk, the newly hired special assistant to the chancellor, said the chancellor changed his enrollment plans for a number of reasons.

One was that an even growth rate is better than one that is held low for six years and then shoots up to admitting 700 additional students each year after that, Hauk said.

Also, she said, "When he (Stevens) first came, it was before the university system started talking about their difficulty in accommodating all the students eligible to enter the University of California."

But regardless of Stevens' reasoning for dropping his slower-growth plans, city officials are not mollified.

Mayor Laird said he was very disappointed with Stevens' announcement, which was officially made at a dinner meeting between Laird and Stevens last night.

"Under the new proposal, the closest we get to his original enrollment plan is in the year 2005," Laird said.

He added that he received indications from Stevens that the original enrollment plan would be dropped.

In a final effort to avert that, Laird said he made his announcement at the City Council meeting Tuesday evening of the chancellor's intentions.

"It was clear to me that he has been responding to pressure on this," Laird said. "That pressure came from UC in Berkeley, the faculty, the students and the community. I was just hoping he would feel the community pressure to a greater degree."

Despite Laird's early release of the chancellor's news, Laird said the meeting last night between the two was congenial.

"He jokingly told me he would rather write his own press releases," he said.

And underlying Laird's humor on the matter are some serious concerns about university growth.

He called the new plan "dangerous" in terms of its impact on local water resources. The city simply doesn't have the water resources to accommodate the extra students, Laird said. The city faces strict water rationing this summer.

The university has stated its intention to develop water sources on campus that would supply a third of the university's needs, but Laird said he sees this as unlikely.

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"I'm confident the university can't pull out that much water (from wells on campus) without greatly impacting the community," Laird said.

Also, the eventual 15,000 figure of student enrollment is a cause of concern to community leaders.

The environmental impact report for the university's Long-Range Development Plan, scheduled to be released in July, will look at mitigations for enrollment growth at the university to between 12,000 and 15,000 students.

Apparently, Laird said, Stevens is not even considering the lower growth figure and is automatically going to the higher enrollment figure.

On this matter, Hauk said the chancellor must look at the upper limits of enrollment growth, and that's why the 12,000 enrollment figure wasn't outlined in the chancellor's plan.