

Local

^{Demonstrations} Students start hunger strike

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SANTA CRUZ — A handful of students started a two-day hunger strike at UC Santa Cruz Thursday to protest the recent \$550 fee hike.

About a dozen students gathered outside the Baytree Bookstore, cardboard signs and sleeping bags in tow, before walking up to McHenry Library foyer, where they expected to spend the night.

Eli Ilano, part of a "loose coalition of concerned students" who joined the strike, said the students were fasting "to show that we're serious about this, and we're willing to make a sacrifice."

UC Regents recently approved a 24 percent fee increase that many students say will put higher education out of their price range.

"We're angry and we're frustrated, and we don't know exactly what to do," Ilano said.

Ted Duggan, campus office director, said the hunger strike was planned by the University of California Student Association on a system-wide basis, with UC Irvine and UC Berkeley students reportedly taking the lead.

"We aren't just spoiled college students. ... This is a problem with our educational system," said sophomore Amy Salo. "Our government's priorities are backwards."

Ilano said the protesters were hoping they wouldn't have problems with camping at the library. "Our goal isn't to be arrested; we just want to get something started," he said.

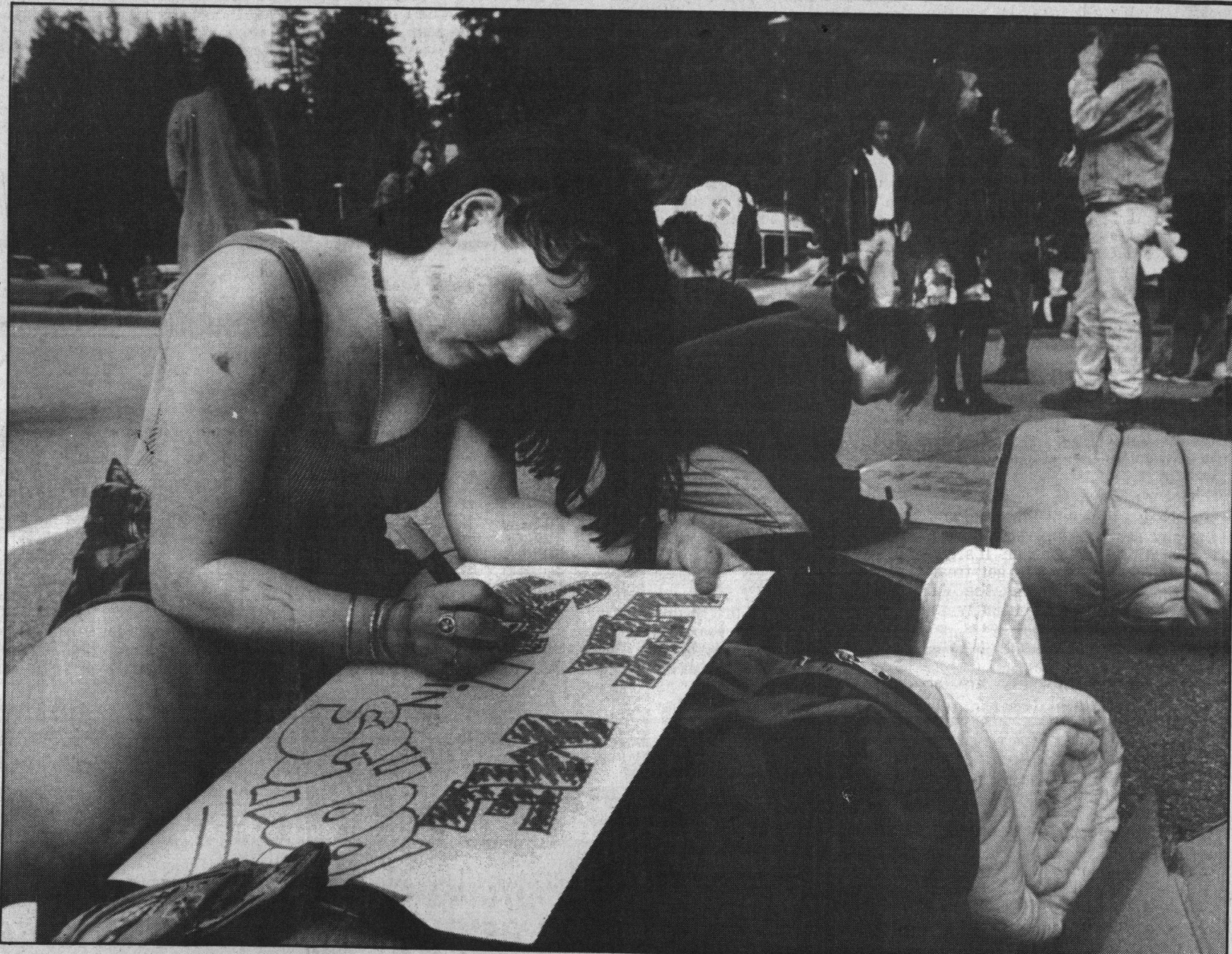
A campus policewoman said officers had been "lenient" in the past in letting students stay overnight in the foyer.

At least 20 students are expected to meet with the UCSA lobbyist Monday to discuss how to push the Legislature to oppose Gov. Pete Wilson's budget and the fee hike, Duggan said.

"It's up to the Legislature to start protecting us ... and the American dream of going to college," he said.

Jim Burns of the UCSC information office said, "No one in the UC system is pleased by the proposal to raise fees, including Gov. Wilson, who made the recommendation in his proposed state budget." The fee hike, he said, along with salary freezes for the second year in a row for faculty and staff, and cuts in central administration are seen as "ways to close the gap between the budget UC sought and one the governor can provide in these difficult economic times."

Failing to close that gap, said Burns, "threatens UC's long-standing commitment to guarantee enrollment to all UC-eligible high school graduates in the state."



UCSC student Erin Martin works on a poster Thursday, preparing for vigil and fast protesting UC fee hike.

Bill Lovejoy/Sentinel