

# Meet George Blumenthal

Our 10th chancellor is focused on the campus's future

**When George Blumenthal** was officially named chancellor on September 19, 2007, he had already served as acting chancellor for 14 months and as a UCSC faculty member and academic leader for 35 years. The astronomy and astrophysics professor, who joined the campus in 1972, will be formally inaugurated as UCSC's 10th chancellor on Friday, June 6, 2008.

Blumenthal, 62, is a tall, easy-going man with a quick sense of humor. His many leadership positions at UC Santa Cruz and within the UC system include chair of the Astronomy and Astrophysics Department, chair of the UCSC Academic Senate, chair of the system-wide Academic Council, and two years as faculty representative on the UC Board of Regents.

In this recent conversation, Blumenthal looks to the future and reflects on UCSC's past and its evolution as a nationally ranked university.



## On becoming chancellor

It offers the opportunity to apply all my experiences and insights, and my commitment to providing leadership and making a difference. UC Santa Cruz is truly a special place, and I love it dearly. It's been on an upward trajectory for more than a decade and I'm determined to keep it moving upward. I am fortunate to become chancellor at a pivotal moment for UCSC. This is a campus on the move.

## On UCSC's distinctiveness

On this exciting campus, outstanding teaching and research take place at one of the most beautiful locations in the world. When I joined UCSC 35 years ago, I found a place where I could reach out to faculty from other disciplines and learn from them. I discovered the intellectual stimulation that continues to thrive here. Our faculty are inquisitive and willing to put aside assumptions or paradigms and think big thoughts; students are interested not just in learning but in learning how to think.

## Immediate priorities

Continuing to elevate UCSC is my first priority. UCSC is among the nation's top-tier universities, both for innovative and effective teaching and for research that serves society. We've established a national reputation in many fields. I want to build additional strength in fields that are important to the future of our students, the state and our nation. My goal as we approach the campus's 50th anniversary in just seven years is to ensure that UCSC further enhances its reputation as a top-ranked research university and a leading institution for educating students.

Every decision I make is designed to help UCSC move forward. I want to increase private support, to invest all our resources strategically in those areas where we can make an enormous difference.

Ultimately, the quality of the university depends on the quality of the faculty. The best students come to study with the best faculty. The best faculty drive new ideas, tackle the most difficult problems. That's why it is important that we—that the university as a

whole—continue a program to raise faculty salaries to competitive levels. Child care remains a high priority for faculty and staff. I want UCSC to continue to be a family-friendly campus.

I am committed to increasing diversity in all its forms among students, staff and faculty. I am also personally committed to making UCSC an environmentally sustainable campus.

## Transition from academic leader to chancellor

Success and commitment to education is in our DNA. More and more undergraduate students want to come here. That's a measure of the quality of our undergraduate program and I am proud that students recognize it. Our faculty are committed to education. You can see it in the kind of individual attention they give to students, and in the ability of undergraduates to become involved in research. I want our undergraduate experience to be unsurpassed.

Research always has been a component of our mission as a UC campus. A number of years ago, when I was chair

of the Academic Senate, the senate and chancellor set a goal of increasing graduate enrollment, which I strongly support. We've doubled the number of graduate offerings in the last 10 years. Nine percent graduate students is just too small to be consistent with the quality of research and the quality of undergraduate education we want to maintain.

## Hardest part about being chancellor

Wearing a tie and not being able to wear shorts; that's number one! Number two is both hard and somewhat interesting: having to shift gears completely five or six times a day. Going from a meeting on a personnel matter, to meeting with political leaders, to giving a speech, to meeting with a donor, to meeting with students, to a conference call on tough budget issues. Constantly changing gears with no transition in between is almost as hard as having to wear a tie.

## Challenges ahead

This spring, we'll see the largest graduating high school class in California history. The state's mandate is to provide space for all qualified students to attend the University of California; they are our future.

I take seriously our obligation to have the classrooms, labs, facilities, and faculty to provide those students with the quality education they will need to contribute to society. Balancing these demands is difficult, however, especially in tough budget years.

Also, the university's need to serve the growing student population affects the local community, both positively and negatively. I've focused a lot of time and effort on these impacts, and my hope is that we will find ways to reach a resolution that everyone can sign off on.

## On Silicon Valley

UC Santa Cruz is the UC closest to Silicon Valley, the world's center of innovation. We have a significant presence there: We offer graduate and executive training programs, as well as oversee a multimillion-dollar research center. We are also planning for a new school of management that will focus on globalization and technology.

We have public partnerships with NASA and DeAnza/Foothill Community colleges, and we also have private partners, such as Hewlett Packard.

Many of UCSC's strengths grow from our physical location—our preeminence in marine and ocean sciences and environmental studies, for example. We see a great potential for more research and teaching directly related to issues of Silicon Valley.

*Chancellor Blumenthal can be reached via e-mail at chancellor@ucsc.edu*

*More information is on the web at chancellor.ucsc.edu*