NOW
WHAT?

Following years of funding cuts, Cabrillo President Brian King and UC Santa Cruz Chancellor George Blumenthal weigh in on the state of higher education in California.
WHAT'S BECOME OF PUBLIC HIGHER EDUCATION IN CALIFORNIA?

Cabrillo President Brian King and UC Santa Cruz Chancellor George Blumenthal weigh in.

BY ELIZABETH LIMBACH

It’s been a rough couple of years for California schools. Often it seems as though it’s just bad news piling on top of bad news: $1.4 billion slashed from the University of California, California State University and community college systems, tuition hikes, layoffs, eliminated majors... And considering the state’s sorry financial situation, it’s likely to just get more grim. But what does it all actually mean? What will become of education in the Golden State? And what is it like to be at the helm of a university or college and presiding over these damaging cuts? We sought these answers and more from the leaders of two treasured local institutions of higher education—UC Santa Cruz Chancellor George Blumenthal and Cabrillo College President Brian King.

REDUCTIONS

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In the last three years, the UCSB has eliminated or reduced more than 300 staff positions.
Q&A with George Blumenthal
—UC SANTA CRUZ CHANCELLOR

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Your relationship with UCSC stretches much further back, however, to when you joined the campus in 1972 as a professor of astronomy and astrophysics. Are there ways in which it’s the same? I would say many of the values that really characterize UC Santa Cruz are still the same, including the importance of the college system as a way of providing a community for incoming freshers when they arrive so they have a shared living/learning community. The commitment to undergraduate education has also continued. More than 60 percent of our undergraduates have done a research project under the supervision of a faculty member, and that is really quite rare among universities. A third value that the campus has had since its inception is the importance of the environment in which we live and sustainability. We’ve been a leader in environmental issues as a campus. That’s been true since day one—since [founder chancellor Dean] Kiepenkerl marked a tree so they wouldn’t cut it down. A lot of the environmental efforts on the campus today are being led by students—they’ve stepped up and taken a leadership role in protecting the environment. All of those values have characterized the campus since the Middle Ages when I first arrived.

How have the budget problems of the last several years changed UCSC’s ability to serve its students, or to attract new students? I’m tempted to start by quoting Dickens by saying that it feels like the best of times and the worst of times. On the one hand, this is a really challenging period in the history of the University of California system and the campus in particular. Our budgets have gone down. Tuition has gone up dramatically, so from the perspective of parents and students, the university is a lot more expensive than it used to be. This is galling considering the master plan for education in the State of California called for no tuition. The zero tuition model envisioned by the master plan is a concept that served the State of California very well. The amount of money coming into the campus to educate students has declined and the actual cost that is spent on education has gone down, despite tuition going up so much. This is a trend in California where unfortunately we’ve been leading the country. It’s also a trend in public high education throughout the country.

I’m sure there are many, but what are some of the biggest ways you’ve seen the school change?

The most obvious, and perhaps most trite, is that we’re grown a lot. We might have been four or five thousand students when I arrived and now the school has a little over 16,000 students. That’s a significant amount of growth. But the most important change I’ve seen is a real commitment to excellence. I’ve seen the quality of the campus change dramatically—for the student experience and the research experience. For example, when I first came it was fair to say that there was really only one department (astrophysics) on campus that could lay claim to being recognized as among the best. Now there are more than a dozen departments that are among leaders in the country.

George Blumenthal’s career spans from his work as a theoretical astrophysicist and astronomy professor to serving on several university governing bodies, such as the “Size and Shape of UC” working group through the UC Commission on the Future. Blumenthal was named chancellor of UCSC in September 2007, after serving as acting chancellor for 14 months. GT caught up with Chancellor Blumenthal while he recovered from brain surgery in September. He had already returned to work at UCSC part-time, and said he was “chomping at the bit to get back” full-time.

You came on board as the acting chancellor at a tense time for UC Santa Cruz. Then Chancellor Denice Denton had just committed suicide, and you stepped in to fill her shoes. What was it like taking over at that time? It was an interesting time to say the least. When I became acting chancellor, I was concerned about several things: most important for me was reestablishing effective leadership on the campus. I dedicated a lot of time to meeting with a lot of student and faculty groups, to make it clear that there was someone at the helm and that we were making progress. In the 10 years before that, the campus had made an enormous amount of progress and I wanted to continue that.

Chancellor Blumenthal, pictured with UCSC students Sylve Childress and Jared Marchese, at the school’s arboretum earlier this year celebrating the arrival of the San Francisco manzanita to the native plant collection. CAROLYN LLIGATTUTA
“One of the great ironies is ... the University of California system is the world’s greatest public university. The master plan is still emulated throughout the world. There is not a state in the country or a nation in the world that wouldn’t exchange their higher public education system for California’s, but there’s also probably not a state in the country that would exchange their state government for ours.”

When you look 10, 20, or even 50 years down the line, what do you see for UCSC? For the UC system, in general? I see an ever-greater willingness to take our fate in our own hands as a campus. That manifests itself through the commitment of our students to the environment, and of our campus to enhance its fundraising abilities—we’re in the very early stages of our first comprehensive campus fundraising campaign. We are trying to be more active about increasing revenues so that we can make education more accessible. I’m really optimistic about how well we can move forward.

Long-term, we as a country have to be making some difficult decisions. One of the reasons the U.S. has thrived so well since WWII, and California has since about the 1960s, has been the commitment to higher education. The reason we’ve done so well is because we’ve made higher education so available, and it’s becoming lesser and lesser so because of the increases in tuition. If we’re going to end up as a privatized university, that will make it evermore difficult to provide the opportunities for students. The state and country have to face up to that. Will we invest in the future, in the people, who will continue to make the state and country such an economic engine? Or will we back away from that?

The state’s budget isn’t going to recover in the next year, or several years. What’s next on the chopping block when UCSC gets more state-mandated cuts? We cut in many areas as deeply as I think we could cut while maintaining the quality that’s essential for UCSC. So when you ask about the next level of cuts, it ties into the discussion at the [September UC] regents meeting about how high can tuition go—how does one balance the need to maintain funding for the university and keeping down the cost for students and parents? I don’t think it’s at all obvious how we could cut more without seriously degrading the quality of the education we provide. It’s impressive we’ve been able to do that so far.

How has UCSC’s relationship with the local community changed since you’ve been chancellor? It’s very much changed for the better. When I became chancellor we were embroiled in multiple lawsuits with the city and county, and in the middle of huge disputes about long-term planning and growth. I’m really proud of the city leadership and county leadership because we’ve been able to get together and resolve our differences, and more than that begin to work collaboratively on a number of fronts. Our relationship is very positive. I’m really proud of that, I’m really pleased. It’s a public benefit—it doesn’t do a whole lot of good if public agencies are fighting with one another.
Q&A with Brian King

CABRILLO COLLEGE PRESIDENT AND SUPERINTENDENT

BIO:
Brian King came to Cabrillo College in 2004, before which he served as vice president at Ozarks Technical Community College in Springfield, Mo. With eight years as Cabrillo’s president under his belt, he’s the third longest serving of the college’s presidents. We visited King at the school’s main campus in Aptos to look back on those years and forward at those to come.

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The last few years, in particular, have been interesting for Cabrillo. Let’s start with the good: the school had record enrollment a few years ago and has some exciting new facilities. Where is the school thriving? You mentioned the new facilities—the wonderful new performing arts center with the theater and recital hall and new classrooms for the arts, and also for health and wellness. They are gifts the community gave to ourselves through the two bond issues. And our new construction project, the Green Technology Center in Watsonville, is nearing completion. In 2004 [when I arrived], none of those buildings were under construction, so it’s been a wonderful transformation physically of our campus, and it would not have been possible without the generous support of the people of Santa Cruz County passing two bond issues. Just as exciting as the facilities has been our work in collaborating to improve outcomes for our students. Even though the state funding has been a challenge, Cabrillo has been able to be very involved in a partnership with the

Over the years you’ve vied for presidencies of other community colleges around the country—do you plan on sticking around at Cabrillo? We have so many fun things going on now that I can’t imagine being anywhere else. The budget is certainly a great challenge, but we have a lot of great collaborations going on. This is a great place to be.
school districts in the county and also our college and university partners, helping our students be more prepared to attend college.

Have you seen results from those efforts? We have. It's not a quick fix, it will take a lot of years and commitment. But, for example, last year we had meetings between Cabrillo math and English faculty and local high school math and English faculty—it was really catalytic for the different teachers to see what they need to be doing to help students, and that it's not just a hand-off; it's a partnership between high school teachers and college teachers.

Earlier this year, the state cut $400 million from community colleges, meaning a lower operating budget for Cabrillo, fewer courses, and higher enrollment fees. Do you feel that the school made the best possible decisions when enacting those reductions?

Since 2008, it's been around $7 million in permanent cuts for us. With a budget that started in the range of $62 million, that's a huge percentage. We're looking at probably more than 10 percent reduction in our operating budget in a four-year period. The magnitude of the cuts is very significant, but I think one of the strengths of the college is that there hasn't been a lot of blame. There's an understanding that these are factors that we don't have local control over—the amount of money that Sacramento has and how much they allocate to higher education. At Cabrillo we worked together through our shared governance processes, so that every group and type of employee is represented in our discussion. So I think we're unique in that strength, that we make the decisions together. We aren't doing it top down. I do think we made the best decisions we can, given the hand that we've been dealt. In some ways we've even been able to improve services to students in the process of looking thoughtfully at how we're doing things.

Can you give an example of that?
The reduction in course sections is hard on our students, but it forces us to look to what courses students need to complete their degrees and transfer and focus resources there.

Overall, do you think these budget changes affect the school's ability to serve its students?

It has. We're serving fewer students, from a peak enrollment of around 17,000 in 2009 to now, at around 15,000. With fewer course sections there is no question that students who need to be here have not been able to find a way to enroll. That's devastating, and I think our community needs to understand that some ways we work so well together managing our budget [mean] that those losses aren't visible because we're serving the students who are here exceedingly well, but with fewer seats. There are many students who need to be enrolled in college who can't be.

Your enrollment fees have gone up to $36 a unit, compared to the drastic tuition hikes at the UCs and CSUs—so you can serve fewer students, but there are probably more students needing this more affordable option.

Yes, that's true. As people are being priced out at CSU or UC, the thought is 'well, we can go to the community college,' but as we're being squeezed for resources, the tragedy is that some students aren't finding a place.

Where does public higher education go from here?

I think we're at a crossroads. The direction we're taking, we'll pay a really high price in future years because a high quality certificate or degree is really the key, and if we are reducing our capacity for students to graduate, we'll have jobs that require that level of training that will go unfilled. A big part of California's success throughout the
"It doesn't help anyone for us to bemoan the loss of however millions of dollars. It's real. The loss is real. But our job is to focus on what we can do with what we have."

for the current fiscal year. It looks increasingly likely that some of the triggers in the budget will prompt mid-year cuts. A lot of organizations will have to scramble to figure out where to find that money. This is our fourth year of this; we're skeptical of state revenue estimates, so we built into our budget a $1 million cut. So we think we'll be able to focus all of our energy on the year that begins July 2012. The big picture is that our projected expenses will exceed our projected revenues for 2012-2013 by roughly $6 million. Even with $7 million in cuts over four years, we go into next year with a big gap between what we think we're obligated to spend and what we think we'll receive in revenue. We will have some savings to use, but we're still beginning with having to reduce expenses by $3 to $4 million, in that range. Further cuts will come from a lot of different places. Understandably, after cutting $7 million people wonder 'why aren't we done?' and we have to explain that the expenses keep going up and the revenues keep falling.

How do you go about planning deeper cuts?
Even with the 10 percent funding cut, our budget is still significant. So the question we need to ask is how do we use the resources we have to best serve our students and the community? ... It doesn't help anyone for us to bemoan the loss of however millions of dollars. It's real. The loss is real. But our job is to focus on what we can do with what we have.
It's not all doom and gloom on our local college campuses these days. There are plenty of inspiring students, noteworthy achievements, fascinating research projects, and promising developments to keep the hope for higher education alive. Here is a sampling:

**CABRILLO**

1. Situated beside Cabrillo's Watsonville outpost and atop the former Watsonville Public Library site, the Cabrillo Green Technology Center in Watsonville, which is under construction and will open in spring 2012, will educate and train students on skills for "green" jobs, including solar technology, renewable and recyclable building materials, and much more.

2. In September, Cabrillo became the recipient of a $4.3 million Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM) grant. The funds will flow in over five years and be used to promote education in these subjects.

3. Cabrillo College is at the heart of the recently announced Santa Cruz County College Committee (SACC) effort, in which a coalition of county-wide public education institutions—Cabrillo, CSU Monterey Bay, San Jose State University, UC Santa Cruz, and all 12 school districts in the county—have partnered up to prepare local youth for college. "The emphasis is on having more of our high school students ready," King tells GT. One way they've already set about achieving this was by having Cabrillo math and English faculty meet with local high school math and English faculty to discuss what is expected of incoming college students. Also at the hands of SACC, all county fourth graders will now tour Cabrillo College to learn about college life. King attributes the speed at which the SACC collaboration went from mere idea to full swing (it was first discussed just last spring) to the creativity borne of the dire budget situation. "It was really a remarkable accomplishment to get that many groups together on the same page," he says. "The budget can really weigh on everyone, so there was a desire to have a positive project to grab a hold of. It's one of those ironic things that without the budget stress we might not have been able to get such a diverse group together so quickly."

4. The school was also forced to get creative when it came to their book store, which, like many college bookstores, was facing rapidly declining textbook sales. To help get the campus bookstore back on track, respected local institution Bookshop Santa Cruz is providing interim management for a three-month period that began in September. The campus staff continues to operate the bookstore, but receives day-to-day management and expert knowledge and insights from Bookshop Santa Cruz.

**UC Santa Cruz**

1. Santa Cruzans can take pride in the fact that top-notch research is being done on the City on a Hill. UCSC is ranked third in the world for research influence, according to a recent analysis by Thompson Reuters. Outranked only by Princeton University and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, the announcement gives a much-deserved nod to the school's consistent and prolific research developments. Among the notable efforts is the school's cancer research, including the work of molecular engineering professor David Haussler and his research team on The Cancer Genome Atlas and Cancer Genomics Browser.

2. The school's undergraduate Computer Game Design major was the first in the UC system, and one of the first in the nation, when it was founded in 2006. Now, its pupils are going on to do big things in the gaming world: a team of 10 recent UCSC game design grads had their senior project, a game called Syz-EG, turned into an iPad game available through the Apple App Store.

3. Poetry has been given a boost at UCSC, thanks to recently established George P. Hitchcock Modern Poetry Fund at Porter College. Hitchcock taught writing at UCSC from 1970 to 1989, and passed away at 96 years old in August. Following his death, his partner, Marjorie Simon, donated $500,000 to the school to establish the fund, which will support modern and contemporary poetry projects, including readings, a poetry prize, residencies for poets, commissions for song cycles and poetry-related performances.

4. Dubbed "California's best-kept literary secret" in 2005 by San Francisco Chronicle book critic David Kipen, the school's Dickens Project is the most prominent center for the study of Charles Dickens in the world. Founded in 1981 by literature professors John Jordan and Murray Baumgarten, and UC Riverside English professor Ed Eigre, the annual summer series attracts faculty and graduate students from universities across the globe. The 2011 Dickens Project was forced to close enrollment early due to maxed registration—a first in the program's history—so it will be interesting to watch the level of interest as the 2012 installment approaches.

5. In the day of iPads, Kindles and ever decreasing attention spans, it's no surprise that libraries are facing an existential crisis. But UCSC met the challenge with vigorous creativity, remodeling its McHenry Library to engage and inspire any 21st Century student. It's casual, inviting, and even allows—gasp!—talking. There's a laptop bar, 60 computer stations, porches, lawn gardens (you can plug your laptops in on outdoor benches), and the north-facing Grateful Dead archives, which open in April 2012. Students can fuel up at the new Global Village Café, which is managed by Hoffman's Bistro and Patisserie in Downtown Santa Cruz. The tech-savvy eatery includes two rotating digital newspaper displays that feature the day's headlines from 140 worldwide publications. And, if aSlug can look up from his or her computer screen for long enough, there are also the library's expansive views of towering redwood trees... not a bad place to cram, if you ask us.

Earlier this year, in order to close a monstrous budget deficit of its own, the state slashed $1.4 billion from higher public education—$500 million each from the University of California and California State University, and $400 million from community colleges. This round of deep cuts came to UCSC and Cabrillo after what has been a tough string of fiscal years filled with relentless budget reductions. Let's take a look:

**CABRILLO**

1. $4 million cut in 2011
2. Current operating budget of $54.7 million, down from $52 million in 2008
3. Fourteen fewer faculty positions and 100 fewer teaching units than in 2008
4. The 2010-2011 school year offered 400 fewer course sections than in 2009-2010
5. Current student enrollment fee is $36 per unit, up from $20 per unit for the 2008-2009 school year

**UC Santa Cruz**

1. $50 million in permanent reductions in the past four years
2. Spending has decreased by 15 percent for academics and 30 percent for administration and institutional support since 2008
3. In the last three years, the schools has eliminated reduced more than 300 staff positions, including 50 in 2011-2012
4. Eliminated funding for 80 unfilled faculty positions
5. Since 2008, funding has been withdrawn for 110 Teaching Assistant positions
6. Tuition for in-state students in 2011-2012: $12,192 (up $1,068 from last year)