

UC SANTA BARBARA

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CHEMISTRY DEPARTMENT OPENS NEW COMPUTER LAB

In a science where numbers usually tell the story, the ratio of 150 students to five computer stations has seemed an unhappy saga of inadequate facilities to University of California, Santa Barbara Chemistry Department faculty.

And with a new major in biochemistry rapidly building enrollment, the ratio was destined to soon grow much higher.

On Thursday, however, the tale will have a happy ending with the opening of a new state-of-the-art, 21-station computational lab financed by the university, the National Science Foundation, the David and Lucile Packard Foundation and Silicon Graphics Inc.

The new lab, located in Room 1153 in Building 557,

will have a ribbon-cutting and open house at 4 p.m. Thursday.

Lab personnel will be on hand to demonstrate the center's capability to perform computations, generate three-dimensional molecular models and other graphical renderings, play educational videos and perform other tasks.

The system also enables instructors to perform tasks visible to their students on a large screen in front of the class as well as on their own individual terminals.

"The new laboratory provides the department and the campus with cutting-edge facilities for instruction in important areas of chemistry and biochemistry," said Paul Weakliem,

chemistry department computer systems manager.

"We all look forward to seeing the impacts of the Computational Lab on student training and achievement."

Using the lab will prepare students well for their careers, Weakliem said.

"This is the same type of equipment chemistry majors would be using at jobs they might get in industry," he said.

To pay for the center, the university put up \$78,000 to match a like contribution from the NSF.

Silicon Graphics Inc. donated about \$27,000 in free equipment in addition to the gear it sold.

The Packard Foundation chipped in \$25,000.

About UC Santa Barbara

The University of California, Santa Barbara is a leading research institution that also provides a comprehensive liberal arts learning experience. Our academic community of faculty, students, and staff is characterized by a culture of interdisciplinary collaboration that is responsive to the needs of our multicultural and global society. All of this takes place within a living and learning environment like no other, as we draw inspiration from the beauty and resources of our extraordinary location at the edge of the Pacific Ocean.