

Fight on, Banana Slugs

To the tune of Aretha Franklin's *Respect*, the University of California-Santa Cruz finally bowed to popular demand and introduced its mascot — Sammy the Banana Slug. Students adopted the gastropod found in the hills around their university as their unofficial nickname more than 17 years ago, but school officials resisted the change from Sea Lions. In 1986, the chancellor begrudgingly agreed to the Banana Slugs nickname, but only in cartoon form. The school lacked a costumed mascot until Tuesday, when a muscular Sammy made its first live



By Dan Coyro, AP

Sammy the Banana Slug: Makes his first public appearance.

appearance, at the school's annual fall festival. "There is no reason to be shy or be embarrassed about being a Banana Slug," athletic director **Mark Majeski** told students. But that hasn't always been the case. Back in 1981, then-Chancellor **Robert Sinsheimer** called the name inappropriate and ignored a student vote to ditch the Sea Lions name. Some athletic teams also grumbled about being associated with slugs. But in 1986, students voted again, choosing the Banana Slug by a 5-1 margin. The school has created two versions of the mascot — a cute, cuddly banana slug and a "mighty, fighting banana slug" capable of intimidating imposing teams, Majeski said.