September 19, 2011

Current Patterns and Action Plan: William S. Richardson School of Law

Retention and Graduation Rates

The main thrust of the discussion and planning connected to the “July, 2011 Advance” concerns undergraduate retention and graduation rates. While the Law School does not have a major role in these matters, we do have some connections, both direct and indirect. In addition, our relative success in retention and graduation rates for law students may contain seeds of future success for others.

We first offer a brief review of our recent history:

A. Regular JD Program

From 2005-2010, we admitted a total of 551 regular Full-time JD students, including Ulu Lehua students.

Currently 525 of these 551 JD students either have graduated or are still enrolled (a 95.28% graduation/and retention rate). Of the total of 551 students, 24 transferred to other schools or withdrew from school voluntarily (4.35%).

Also, sadly, one of these 551 students died (0.18%) and one was dismissed from the Law School following a disciplinary suspension (0.18%).

No regular JD program students have been permanently dismissed for academic reasons and 335 of these 551 JD students have graduated (60.79%), while 185 of these 551 JD students are still enrolled or otherwise considered 'active' students (33.57%).
B. Part-time Program

We began an evening Part-time program in 2008 and we have admitted 77 Part-time students from 2008 – 2010. To date, 6 of these 77 students have left the school for personal reasons (7.79%) and 1 of these 77 students was academically dismissed (1.29%).

Currently 70 of these 77 Part-time students graduated or are still enrolled (90.90% graduation/retention rate) and the first 12 of the 77 completed their degrees as of the summer, 2011 (15.58%).

Combining the full-time and part-time programs, the Law School admitted a total of 628 students from 2005-2010.

Of this total of 628 students, 595 students have either graduated or are still enrolled (94.74%) and 347 out of the 595 students have already graduated (58.31%).

C. LLM Program for Foreign-Trained Lawyers

We admitted our first class of LLM students in 2005 and we admitted a total of 66 LLM students from 2005-2010. All but one—65 of 66—received their degrees (98.48% graduation rate) and the one who did not failed to meet his financial obligations, rather than his situation representing an academic failure.

We are proud of these numbers and we believe that they are attributable to a number of different factors. Prime among them is our ability to provide individualized attention and direct, personal services.

Luckily, we are one of the smallest law schools in the United States and we maintain and celebrate a face-to-face culture. We have skilled professionals in admissions, financial aid, and student services, as well as the benefit of considerable faculty and staff time devoted to acclimating and supporting our foreign LLM students, for example, as well as students in our Full-time and Part-time programs. We have a strong Academic Support program that involves student tutors assigned to our large classes as well as significant co-ordination by a staff member. We also have our own Writing Center and various forms of direct support for students who seek
assistance, including an unusually accessible faculty who are deeply devoted to helping as well as teaching our students.

D. Ulu Lehua Program

Our Ulu Lehua program is a good example of the Law School’s commitment to opportunity for all and to providing enough support to afford success. This program demands considerable resources but it has a great track record and is, we believe, a national model. In the Law School’s first year, the first faculty members founded the program—formerly called the PreAdmission Program. Through this program, 12 students who have overcome adversity and who have demonstrated significant promise for leadership in underserved communities are admitted through separate consideration by the admissions committee, which is composed of three faculty members and two elected student representatives.

Once admitted, the Ulu Lehua students have the direct assistance of a director who tutors, cajoles, encourages, and intensely supports them. They take a special course together with the director. The Law School has been very fortunate to have had Judy Weightman and Chris Iijima as directors over the past 15 years, now succeeded by Professor Linda Hamilton Krieger. Thus the Ulu Lehua students have had the benefit of extraordinarily committed directors—the latter two as tenured full professors—who devote extraordinary time and effort and creativity to assure that these students succeed.

E. Joint Degree and Multidisciplinary Programs

An additional factor that helps to keep our law students not only enrolled but also very engaged is that we allow and even encourage them to take courses outside the Law School. The most frequent combination of courses often leads to a joint degree with the Shidler College of Business; an average of approximately 10 percent of our regular Full-time students graduate with both a JD and an MBA. The Law School also encourages joint degrees with other programs, and some of our students take advantage of these opportunities across the campus, while many more take a course or two in other disciplines while they are in Law School.

The Law School has also encouraged and helped to launch and to maintain a UH-Mānoa effort to offer multidisciplinary courses and to make faculty appointments across various schools. The
Child Welfare Clinic is a good example. Now in its sixth year, this collaboration among the Schools of Education, Law, Nursing, and Social Work has done effective work in bringing the social capital of the University out into the community. As the "rising professional" students assist various community groups with specific projects requested by those groups in the realm of helping children, the students also learn the strengths and weaknesses of their own chosen professions and those of other members of their teams, with whom they are likely to deal throughout their professional careers in Hawai‘i. (An article describing this innovative clinic and a successful spin-off in the Medical Legal Partnership at the Kalihi Kokua Community Health Center has been accepted for publication in the American Psychological Association Journal.)

In addition, we have encouraged multidisciplinary appointments such as those for Charles Lawrence, supported by Law, the College of Social Sciences, and the Chancellor; Carol Petersen, who directs the Matsunaga Peace Institute and teaches both in the College of Social Sciences and in the Law School; and Maxine Burkett, which involves a partnership between the Law School and SOEST, where she directs the Center for Island Climate Adaptation and Policy (ICAP).

We are undertaking a similar approach in working closely with the Hawai‘inuiākea School of Hawaiian Knowledge on joint appointments as well as several collaborative programs, including a very promising initiative for undergraduates to be trained as navigators within the health arena.

Our suggestions for an action plan include building upon these very promising multidisciplinary initiatives, mostly begun under and championed by Chancellor Hinshaw. Multidisciplinary work is often difficult, but UH-Mānoa seems particularly attuned to their great potential and more likely than most universities to start and to foster such programs. We have advanced well beyond the typical labeling and then hoping for the best that occurs throughout the country.

Finally, for several years, we have been exploring the possibility of an honors program for undergraduates, somewhat mirroring the new honors program linked to admission to JABSOM. If we were to launch such a program, we believe it would help to attract and retain very promising undergraduates. Elisabeth Steele Hutchison, our Director of Admissions, has been teaching an undergraduate prelaw course for a number of years and she is directly involved in our ongoing consideration of such a program.
Native Hawaiian Advancement

The Law School has been committed to attracting and educating future leaders of the Native Hawaiian community since our beginnings. Though we have had marked success in achieving this goal over the years, we have made giant strides since we launched the Ka Huli Ao Center for Excellence in Native Hawaiian Law in 2005 and hired Melody MacKenzie as its first director.

Ka Huli Ao has accomplished a great deal in each of its core commitments: education and legal scholarship, community outreach, and the preservation of invaluable historical, legal, and other materials. It has received significant external support not only from the federal government, but also from Kamehameha Schools and the Office of Hawaiian Affairs. It now has a certificate program in Native Hawaiian Law and it has been at the center of an unusually successful LSAT tutoring and outreach program that has helped to increase the number of Native Hawaiian students at the Law School significantly. Through the leadership and encouragement of the Chancellor, we recently have moved two extraordinary faculty members, Melody MacKenzie and Kapua Sproat, from soft-money positions to the tenure track. We are also now looking forward to sharing two additional tenure track positions with the Hawai‘i‘inui‘kea School of Hawaiian Knowledge. In addition, we have devoted considerable resources to providing scholarships for our Native Hawaiian students and to creating and staffing our post-JD Fellowship program.

Recent data compiled by Ka Huli Ao includes the following:

LSAT Prep Class

2009-10 – 38 Native Hawaiians

2010-11 – 30 Native Hawaiians (we had fewer students than usual because one course was the pilot UH-Hilo course so we limited the number of students in that course)

No. of NHwn. Students in Law School

Fall of 2010 – 62 total

Fall of 2011 – 57 total


**Summer Fellowships:**

2009-10 – 6 Native Hawaiians

2010-11 – 5 Native Hawaiians; 1 Pacific Islander

**Scholarships:**

2009-10 – 30 scholarships (25 Native Hawaiians; 5 Pacific Islanders and others with interest in Native Hawaiian law)

2010-11 – 65 scholarships (44 Native Hawaiians; 11 Pacific Islanders and others with interest in Native Hawaiian law)

**Certificate Program:**

May 2010 – 6 Certificate Students (5 Native Hawaiians, 1 non-Native Hawaiian)

May 2011 – 14 Certificate Students (11 Native Hawaiians, 3 non-Native Hawaiians)

**Post-JD Fellowships:**

2009-10 – 2 Native Hawaiians

2010-11 – 4 Native Hawaiians

2011-12 – 2 Native Hawaiians

We also have made giant strides in digitizing and making widely available legal material ranging from official records of the monarchy to records of the international tribunal led by Dr. Kekuni Blaisdell in 1993. Specifics about these programs, our clinics, and our community outreach efforts can be found in Ka He’e, the e-mail newsletter of the Center. Links to the very impressive and varied scholarly work by Ka Huli Ao faculty members are available through the Law School’s website or through Ka He’e.

With the disappearance of federal funding at least for this federal fiscal year, we are currently scrambling to maintain our existing staff and to sustain the programs that they have launched so successfully. It seems clear beyond any reasonable doubt, however, that the leaders of Ka Huli Ao and the students and community people whom they have reached, taught, and helped have already made a profound difference. They are poised to continue to do so and our action item suggestion is to continue to build on the very solid foundation they have established.
Enhancing Graduate Programs

The Law School is not directly involved with improving graduate education and with attracting and retaining graduate students beyond our efforts to create and foster appealing multidisciplinary opportunities for them (discussed above). On the other hand, because of our burgeoning programs and the needs of our increased faculty and staff and our new Part-time program, we have a pressing need that is also an action item. It is: Law School Building Renovation.

By now, no one should be surprised about this crying need. We have fallen far below other law schools in the United States in any group of peers, benchmarks, or competitors in this regard.

We literally have outgrown our building and, though we receive a disproportionately large amount in grants every year compared to other law schools, we cannot begin to compare in terms of our physical plant. This has been and remains the major hurdle we face each time we are involved in an accreditation process with the ABA and the AALS.

The careful conceptual planning we completed in April, 2008 and the Supplemental Development report in April 2009 set forth how our major renovation would benefit the entire UH-Mānoa community. Not only would we have more classroom and activity space to share, but we would have a café where there is already a great deal of pedestrian traffic and a well-planned and highly visible model of sustainable renovation model both in its design and in its operation. This will go far toward Realizing the Dream that Chief Justice Richardson and others shared as they founded and sustained our Law School. We continue to embody opportunity for all, excellence in legal craftsmanship, and practical and effective training for leaders of our state, nation, and the Pacific-Asian region. Our students deserve a building designed and built for the 21st century, complete with hot water.