

HAWAI‘I ISLAND RESIDENT ACCESS TO LEGAL EDUCATION: PROJECT SUMMARY

Introduction: Project Goals and Objectives

The William S. Richardson School of Law was founded in 1973 to increase opportunities for Hawai‘i residents to obtain a legal education. Over the past 35 years, the Law School has worked to realize this founding purpose through many innovative programs designed to expand access to legal education and the legal profession, so that the profession might better serve Hawai‘i’s geographically, culturally, ethnically, and socio-economically diverse communities.

One salient example is the Law School’s Ulu Lehua Scholars Program, previously known as the Pre-Admission Program, which was established in the same year as the law school’s founding. This program provides applicants from legally under-served communities, who have overcome adversity and demonstrated leadership potential and commitment to public service, with an opportunity to gain admission to the Law School, despite numerical admissions indicators like LSAT score or undergraduate grade point averages that, given the law school’s highly competitive admissions process, might otherwise lead to their exclusion. A second example of the law school’s commitment to equity and diversity is an innovative LSAT preparation program, jointly administered by the Law School and its Native Hawaiian Students Association. Over the past four years the ‘Ahahui program, on which this proposed project seeks to build, has dramatically increased the number of Native Hawaiians admitted to the Law School by helping participants raise their LSAT scores. The Law School’s recently-launched part time program, designed to provide access to working students who can not afford to take three years out of the labor market, represents yet a third example.

The proposed project seeks to further the Law School’s commitment to inclusion by expanding access to legal education to residents of Hawai‘i Island, and in particular, to students at the University of Hawai‘i at Hilo. Expanding access in this way will not only further the interests of inter-island equity and fairness – important goals in their own right – but will also enhance the cultural, ethnic, and socio-economic diversity of the Law School’s student body, and ultimately, the Hawai‘i bar.

The Problem to be Addressed

During the past five admissions years (‘03-‘04 to ‘07-‘08), the Law School has received a total of only 12 applications from Hawai‘i or Pacific Island residents attending the University of Hawai‘i at Hilo.¹ This compares with significantly larger numbers of applicants, relative to student body size, from other Hawai‘i or Pacific Island colleges and universities.

¹ Of these 12 U.H. Hilo students, 9 were residents from Hawai‘i Island, two from American Samoa, and 1 from Palau.

The following figure illustrates the problem:

Figure 1:
Applicant Totals by College/University
2004-2008

Undergraduate Institution	# Hawaii Resident & Pacific Islander
U.H. West O'ahu	4
U.H. Hilo	12
U.H. Mānoa	86
Hawai'i Pacific University	40
Brigham Young Univ. - Hawaii	19
Chaminade University	27
University of Guam	8

As these numbers suggest, there exist significant opportunities for expanding access to legal education for Hawai'i Island residents at the Richardson School of Law. Low application rates from U.H. Hilo can not be explained solely with reference to the size of its student body. Last year, for example, U.H. Hilo graduated 530 students with Bachelors' Degrees, compared with approximately 250 from Chaminade University and 500 from Brigham Young-Hawaii. Chaminade and Brigham Young yielded 27 and 19 Hawai'i/Pacific Island resident U.H. law school applicants, respectively, as compared to only 12 from U.H. Hilo. Rick Castberg, a co-principal investigator on this proposed project and U.H. Hilo's pre-law advisor, attributes this low application rate in large measure to U.H. Hilo students' difficulty with the Law School Admissions Test (LSAT), their unfamiliarity with the law school application process, and their unawareness of School of Law opportunities like the Ulu Lehua Scholars and part time programs.

The Proposed Solution

The proposed project represents the beginning of a new Law School initiative to address the under-representation of Hawai'i Island residents and U.H. Hilo students at the Law School by taking concrete steps to increase the matriculation of members of these two groups to the Richardson School of Law.² These concrete steps will include outreach and recruitment events at U.H. Hilo and at University centers in the towns of Hilo, Kailua Kona, and Honoka'a, and a series of Law School Admissions Test (LSAT) preparation workshops, modeled on the 'Ahahui O Hawai'i program, for prospective applicants from Hawai'i Island.

² Beginning in 2009-2010, we hope to expand the initiative to include Maui and Kaua'i Islands.

Project Methods

The proposed project will comprise two interconnected parts. The first is a series of outreach and recruitment workshops to be held at U.H. Hilo, Hawai'i Community College in Hilo, the University of Hawai'i Center-West Hawai'i in Kailua-Kona, and the North Hawai'i Research Center in Honoka'a. These workshops will be preceded by networking and publicity conducted through contacts in the Hawai'i Island legal, government, social activist, and educational communities, and will be designed to disseminate information about law school, legal careers, Richardson's Ulu Lehua and part time programs, and the law school application process. The workshops will be conducted by Richardson law professor and Ulu Lehua Program Director Linda Hamilton Krieger and by Professor Rick Castberg, the Pre-law Program Director at U.H. Hilo, with the participation of law school alumni residing on Hawai'i Island and (during late December and early January) current law students from Hawai'i who have returned home for the winter holidays.

The second program component will be a series of 4 LSAT preparation workshops, to be held at the University of Hawai'i's Hilo campus. These classes will be modeled on the Law School/'Ahahui O Hawai'i's LSAT Preparation Program, which over the past four years has helped increase the admission of Native Hawaiian applicants to the Law School from 15 to 22.

In these classes, participants will be introduced to the LSAT, take an initial diagnostic LSAT test, learn strategies for approaching the four categories of questions included on it, and then take a two additional practice tests under simulated testing conditions. Each practice test will be scored, and the answers reviewed, using materials purchased from the Law School Admissions Council, which produces and administers the LSAT. Participants will also be provided with a program of self-study, so that they can continue their preparation for the February 2009 exam after the workshops have concluded.

Participants in the LSAT preparation class will not only receive training in LSAT test-taking strategies. They will also have an opportunity to develop connections with other prospective applicants from Hawai'i Island, with the UH Hilo pre-law advisor, with the Director of the Ulu Lehua Program, and with current Richardson law students and alumni from Hawai'i Island. The 'Ahahui O Hawai'i LSAT preparation program has demonstrated that the relationships between prospective applicants developed in these workshops both encourage participants to complete their applications and matriculate if admitted, and carry over to help participants adjust to and succeed at Richardson after their matriculation.

Evaluative Criteria

Scores on LSAT practice tests, student evaluations, and the number of law school applications received during the Spring 2009 admissions season will measure program success. With respect to practice test scores, a gain of 5-10 points from the initial

diagnostic test to the final practice test score will code as a success. Raising the number of applications received from Hawai'i Island residents and from residents of Guam, American Samoa, Palau, and other South Pacific nations and territories who are living on Hawai'i Island from the current average of 3 applications per year will also code as a success. We expect that, as the program extends into future years, success will be more accurately measurable. However, we intend and expect to generate improvement in awareness, interest, applications, and test scores as early as spring 2009.

Areas of Diversity Addressed

The proportion of Native Hawaiian and South Pacific Islander students at UH Hilo is significantly greater than their corresponding proportions at U.H. Mānoa (13% vs. 9% and 6% vs. 3%, respectively). Expanding access opportunities for U.H. Hilo students can therefore be expected to increase the ethnic and national origin diversity of the Richardson student body, and ultimately, the Hawai'i bar. As importantly, providing legal educational opportunities to residents of islands other than O'ahu is an important diversity and equity goal in its own right. Access to justice problems exist on all of the Hawaiian Islands, but they are even more pronounced on what O'ahu residents call "the neighbor islands" and in U.S. Pacific Island Territories. Expanding access to prospective law students from these islands can be expected, in the long run, to expand access to legal services on these islands as well. Accordingly, we intend and expect the proposed program to address issues of ethnic, cultural, geographical, and socio-economic diversity.

The Principal Investigators

Linda Hamilton Krieger is a Professor of Law and Director of the Ulu Lehua Scholars Program at the Richardson School of Law. She grew up in Honolulu. After graduating with a B.A. from Stanford University in 1975 and a J.D. from New York University School of Law in 1978, she worked for 13 years as a legal aid and civil rights lawyer, litigating cases in the San Francisco Bay Area, Seattle, Los Angeles, and Honolulu. From 1991 to 2007, she served on the law faculties of the Stanford Law School (1991-1995 and the University of California at Berkeley (1996-2007). Having returned home and joined the Richardson law faculty in 2007, she teaches the Ulu Lehua Seminar, Civil Procedure (in the part time program), Legislation, and Employment Discrimination Law.

Didrick Castberg is Professor of Political Science, Prelaw Advisor, and Chair of the Social Sciences Division at the University of Hawaii at Hilo. He taught for six years at California State University, Los Angeles before returning to Hawaii in 1974. He graduated from Kailua High School and received a B.A. and M.A. from the University of Hawaii at Manoa and a Ph.D from Northwestern University. He co-authored *CASES ON CONSTITUTIONAL LAW* (Doresy Press, 1973) with Victor G. Rosenblum, is the author of *JAPANESE CRIMINAL JUSTICE* (Praeger, 1990), and co-author, with Chris Loos, of *MURDER IN PARADISE* (HarperCollins, 2003), as well as numerous articles and chapters.