Law School will face problems in new year

by Naomi Uyeno
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Growth and survival were the central topics addressed at this year’s William S. Richardson School of Law’s opening convocation last Monday.

The school, which is celebrating its 15-year anniversary since admitting its first class in 1973, has been through some hard times, according to former state Chief Justice William S. Richardson.

Citing past accreditation and instruction problems as several reasons for the difficulties, Richardson said the law school will survive because of the quality of its students and faculty.

The law school’s accreditation problems have been under scrutiny in the past.

In 1985, Dean Jeremy Harrison, then acting dean of the school, fought off rumors that the school was in danger of losing its accreditation.

Concerns arose after the American Bar Association’s accreditation committee raised questions, which included the “lack of stability of leadership at the law school and the university,” according to a Honolulu Star Bulletin article dated Sept. 4, 1985.

The school overcame the problems it faced in the past, and it is taking steps toward molding Hawaii into an international center for Asian-Pacific legal conferences, said state Chief Justice Herman Lum.

Various programs, including law faculty and judicial personnel exchanges with China, have helped the school establish positive relations, Lum said.

A future visit from the ABA to participate in a program with an emphasis on alternative dispute resolutions will allow the state’s legal profession, including the law faculty, to share their knowledge on the subject, he added.

Cynthia Miller, a 1987 graduate, received five awards, including the Carl K. Mirikitani Memorial Scholarship Fund and Valedictory Prize for achieving the highest grade point ratio throughout an entire career.

Also, the Hawaii Academy of Plaintiffs’ Attorneys Award for the “Outstanding Professor of the Year” went to Amy Kastely.

Harrison said he thinks it’s a testament to the school’s growth, its development, and to the commitment of this community that so many awards can be given.