UH professor Kastely honored

by Naomi Uyeno
ka leo staff writer

Award-winning associate law professor Amy Kastely originally intended to practice law when she arrived in Hawaii in 1981 and thought of her teaching position as only temporary.

Things have changed. Seven years later, she is now a full-time professor at the William S. Richardson School of Law and, for the second time, the recipient of the Hawaii Academy of Plaintiff's Attorneys award for Outstanding Professor of the Year.

Kastely said she was shocked when she received news of the award.

She didn't expect to win the award and feels honored her colleagues and students have chosen her, she added.

She wishes, however, that there were more awards given to the "university's unsung heroes," she said.

According to Kastely, because these professors prepare rigorously for classes and teach in distracting classroom environments, they should be recognized for their work.

Kastely, herself, spends at least 12 to 15 hours a week for every class hour, preparing, reading and reviewing materials, she said.

Kastely freely admits she misses some aspects of practicing law. Practicing law keeps one honest because lawyers often look at both sides of an issue, whereas teachers and legal scholars always take one side, she said.

There is no clear answer when it comes to law, and as a result, lawyers and legal scholars must always ask themselves what is the just result in a dispute, Kastely said.

"The problem is you have your own opinions, and there is a tendency to get too convinced of your own side," she said.

She is aware of the image some people have that law is simply a vehicle of power and is corrupt, she said. She feels that view is justified in some ways, given the process of law and the presence of the few who abuse it, she said.

However, she takes a positive position on the subject. She said she views law as "trying to figure out what kind of society we should have, how we should behave toward one another and what responsibilities we have to each other."

Kastely was chosen as HAPA's outstanding professor for both the 1985 and 1988 academic years. She is the first professor to win the award twice.

Before Kastely came to the UH law school in 1981, she taught in the Mandel Clinic of the University of Chicago Law School for two years. She also served as associate editor of the University of Chicago Law Review.

Kastely teaches contract and commercial law at the law school.

Award praises profs

Outstanding professors of the William S. Richardson School of Law are recognized each year by their students and colleagues for their dedication to the teaching and scholarship of law.

The selection for the outstanding professor begins early in the year with the submission of evaluations and nominations by law students.

The four professors with the highest scores are then reviewed and voted on by their colleagues.

Winners are announced in early August, and they receive a $1,000 cash award.

The award is sponsored by the Hawaii Academy of Plaintiff's Attorneys, an organization composed of trial attorneys who represent personal injury victims.


—Naomi Uyeno