New law school associate dean keeps his door open to students

by Bernie Kagawa
staff writer

After serving as acting associate dean at the William S. Richardson School of Law for one and one-half years, Lawrence Foster was chosen to fill the position permanently as of May 1. An emergency hire brought him to the law school as acting associate dean in January 1987.

His job includes academic, career and personal counseling. Students having academic difficulty present the greatest challenges in counseling “because of the . . . problems that the students are going through,” he said.

“Academic dismissals are frequently a result of a larger personal problem that the student might be having. It is very difficult for the student and, therefore, very difficult for the person counseling,” Foster said.

His policy on advising remains an open-door one, as it has for the past year and a half. “That has worked very well,” he said. “I think that students do have a sense that if they have a question or a problem that they can just come right in and see me. I’m here every day from 8 to 5.

“I practiced litigation for six years as an attorney, and one of the things I’ve learned is that most disputes rise out of miscommunication. The best way to avoid disputes and misunderstanding is to sit down as soon as you have the beginning of a problem and talk to somebody about it and find out if it really is a problem.

“Many times, particularly in law schools and other professional schools where there’s a lot of stress because of the course work, it’s very easy for rumors and misunderstandings to develop.”

In Spring 1988, the law school hosted three regional competitions. “That’s the first time that we’ve had a regional competition.” The fact that they decided to come out to Hawaii was an indication that our reputation is becoming established and that people are acknowledging the status and quality of the UH law school.”

One focus of the law school is Pacific and Asian law. In 1987, a professor from Beijing sat in on classes, while another from Korea taught a Korean law course, he said. That class will be repeated next spring, and visiting professors will teach courses in Japanese law, Chinese law and Pacific island law, he said.

“We have a position that the Legislature gave us two years ago to hire a director of Pacific-Asian legal studies,” he said, adding that the position has not been filled yet.

Looking toward the future, Foster said, “I would like to combine my previous training—Chinese studies—with law and perhaps teach a course on Chinese law,” he said. He’s working on translating Chinese legal history, which may lead up to teaching Chinese law classes in about two years, he said.

He received his degree from the School of Law in 1981 and a doctorate in Chinese studies from the University of Washington in 1974.
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For Immediate Release

FOSTER APPOINTED ASSOCIATE DEAN

Lawrence C. Foster has been appointed Associate Dean of the University of Hawaii's William S. Richardson School of Law. He has served as Acting Associate Dean since January of 1987. Dr. Foster has a Ph.D. in Chinese Studies from the University of Washington (1974) and received his law degree from the William S. Richardson School of Law in 1981. He is a 1963 graduate of Kailua High School.