Class of ’76 really gets the act together

Star-Bulletin staff

From the Class of ’76, the following are working, or have worked, in government or community service in Hawaii:

Jennifer Ahn Minami — part-time counsel to state Sen. Patsy Young.

Hayden Burgess, former Office of Hawaiian Affairs trustee and currently vice president for the Pacific and Asia, North America and Scandinavia region of the World Council of Indigenous Peoples.


Catherine O.Y. Chang, former executive director of the state Ethics Commission, now counsel with the state tax department.

Calleen Ching, attorney, Legal Aid Society.

Darwin Ching, Honolulu deputy prosecutor.

Edward Correa, chairman, state Labor Appeals Board.

Patricia Eads, former hearings officer for state Department of Human Services, now Honolulu deputy corporation counsel.

Howard Fukushima, Maui deputy corporation counsel.

Mary D. Johnston, part-time District Court judge.

Carol Fukunaga, state representative, former Waihee aide and 1978 Con Con delegate.

Franklin Hayashida, administrative assistant to state Comptroller Russel Nagata and former 1978 Con Con delegate.

Marjorie Higa-Manuia, Family Court judge.

Allen Hoe, part-time District Court judge.

Karl Ichida, management analyst, Honolulu managing director’s office.

Harriet H.Y. Lewis, state deputy attorney general.

Melody MacKenzie, Native Hawaiian Legal Project.

Wayne Matsuura, state deputy attorney general.

Gerald Miyoshi, chief clerk of the state House; former director of state Crime Commission.

Reinhard Mohr, former executive director, American Civil Liberties Union.

Russel Nagata, comptroller, state Department of Accounting and General Services.

Abelina Shaw, former deputy director of the state Department of Health, counsel to state courts Administrator Janice Wolf (Class of ’85).

William E. Smith, District Court judge.

Kumu Vasconcellos, state deputy attorney general.

John Waihee, governor.
The grads come out with a desire to better life in the islands

By June Watanabe
Star-Bulletin

The story goes that when he was just a long-haired — albeit balding — lawyer-to-be, John Waihee already was talking about being governor of Hawaii one day.

Waihee chuckles at that.

"I may have said that," he said. But he maintains it really was some of his classmates who went around making such brash statements about his future.

"Of my classmates, the only one who openly talked about running for office was (now state Sen.) Russell Blair," he insists. Blair ended up graduating with a later class because he was elected to the state House.

Nonetheless, only 10 years after graduating from the University of Hawaii School of Law in 1976, the predictions had come true. In November 1986, Waihee was elected to the state's highest public office.

Waihee's meteoric political rise — he was elected a delegate to the state Constitutional Convention in 1978, a state representative in 1980 and lieutenant governor in 1982 — is perhaps the most notable success story from that law school Class of '76.

But it's a class that, as a whole, has distinguished itself beyond the fact that its 52 members were the law school's very first graduates.

From the Class of '76, and from succeeding classes, have come a host of men and women who have found jobs in public service — as politicians, judges, state and county government leaders.

From the beginning, the school has encouraged public service.

"The more mainstream people are interested in doing litigation or business law. But a strong undercurrent at the school has always been public service," says Larry Foster, Class of '81 and now the school's associate dean.

"At the time of admission, students are asked what their commitment to the state is, because our mandate is to serve the state," Foster said. "From the admissions process to exiting, (public service) is a strong theme."

Of the first class, nearly half are involved in some kind of public-oriented work. Of the first nine classes, in addition to Waihee, 15 graduates have been elected to public office. Ten of them continue to serve as state senators and representatives, and on the Board of Education.

Later class haven't been as intense as earlier graduates, Waihee feels. The idea of getting involved in the community "was something that was constant when we were in school," he said.

Waihee believes that's because his class not only was the first, but that it also consisted of older students, like himself, who were "generally people who had started to carve out areas of interest and already were involved, with an emphasis in community and political involvement."

Law School stamps its imprint on Hawaii

State Sen. Tony Chang, his classmate, was more specific, ticking off the political ties as follows:


Some came from political families — Glen Takabuki's father is Matsuo Taka-buki, a former legislator and city councilman and now Bishop Estate trustee; Howard Fukushima's father is Yasu-taka Fukushima, a former senator and Circuit Court judge; Ladd Ueoka's father is Meyer Ueoka, a former representative and now Board of Education member; Edward Correa's mother is longtime Democratic Party official Naomi "Sister" Correa; Randy Vitousek's grandfather was former Territorial lawmaker Royal Vitousek.

Some, like Waihee and Franklin Hayashida, already were working for government — both of them for Honolulu's Model Cities program. Others were community activists — Reinhard Mohr, director of the Kualoa-Heeia Ecumenical Youth (KEY) Project, and Russel Nagata for People Against Chinatown Evictions.

The Class of '77 was "more academic," Chang says, but the one following that was "more to our liking — we shared more experiences together." The Class of '76 produced four current state lawmakers.

Early on, people were predicting that the deep friendships and shared philosophies developed at the law school would produce a cadre of lawyers bent on putting their mark on the community.

Was that an overblown prediction? Waihee was asked.

"It's happening now," Waihee insists.

"You can't put together a law school without having an impact, especially a law school that began with the mission of encouraging the participation of students in community affairs."
The University of Hawaii row class of 76 poses at graduation. Seated in the first row, left to right, are Nancy Jones, Glen Takakuliki, Ronald Sekada, John Wolfe, Franklin Hayashi, Robert Schmitt, Allen Hoe, Ken Vong, and Errol Y. Kanno.

Standing, first row, from left to right: Penny Matsumoto, Richard Sugimura, Don Toribio, John Uchida, and Jim Chan.

Second row, from left to right: Nancy Okada, Russell Matsumoto, Sherry Morita, and Teri Yasui.

Third row, from left to right: Allen Chen, Ronald Honda, and Randy Vlousek.


The following students are missing: Muriel Asato, Sally Asato, Robert Asato, Roy Asato, and Carl Asato.