EXCELLENCE IN TEACHING  WCC 1990 WINNER: LIBBY YOUNG

What makes a good teacher?
If you ask Libby Young, Windward Community College's 1990 Excellence in Teaching winner, she might say a good teacher is one who continues to learn.

"The most important thing is to not feel you've arrived as a teacher and never need to improve," Young said. "A teacher has to keep learning, changing and adapting."

For 10 years now, Young has taught journalism fundamentals to college students often taking their first stab at higher education.

"When students are in their early stages of college and thinking about making journalism a career, I enjoy the feeling that I personally can make a difference in their lives," she said.

Turning struggling college students into working journalists has earned Young the reputation as a talented and effective teacher. But the teaching award, given annually by the University of Hawaii for outstanding contribution in a field, also recognizes her professionalism and dedication.

"Her level of professional competency, as shown by her students, and the (campus) newspaper are concrete examples of her abilities," said WCC English instructor Aileen Yim, one of the members of the nomination committee. "Libby is an inspiration to students, and her dedication to them goes beyond the requirements of the classroom."

Her working relationship with the college goes back to the school's roots. As the first public relations officer for the University of Hawaii community colleges, Young helped plan the ceremony that officially opened Windward in 1972.

"I felt I had a history with the school even before I taught here," she said. "There is a pioneer spirit to building a new college and seeing it make a contribution to the community."

Young, who also teaches freshman English, said Windward is special because of its caring, personal atmosphere.

"I enjoy the close interaction between students and teachers at WCC," she said. "I'm excited when students get all fired up about writing stories for the paper. We have a community to serve and we take it seriously. When students interview people in the community, on campus and in government, they begin thinking like professional journalists.

"We're also starting to offer students chances for media internships, independent study projects and freelancing. Even as freshmen and sophomores, they can develop a professional attitude."

Young has watched many of her journalism students progress in the field, moving on to work for newspapers, magazines, television stations and wire services in Hawaii and on the Mainland.

When not at school, Young enjoys spending time with her daughter, Katie, and husband, Jim, the executive director of Hawaii Public Television (KHET). She also writes poetry, plays the piano and is thinking about writing a book.

But the teacher who refuses to correct student papers with red ink because of its negative connotation definitely plans to continue to teach.

"I enjoy teaching—especially at Windward," she said. "We want WCC to be known as a center of writing excellence. In five years, I would like to still be on this campus, just as a better teacher and maybe in a bigger classroom."