**Intro:**

Ladies and gentlemen boys and girls welcome to the class act that kawaii Community College the show that highlights camp is happening that goes deeper with its professors and students so you can hear why this is where you want to be it's that time let's get it on

**Teak:**

Another day here Kauai Community College a beautiful day at that I have the very incredible pleasure I'm sitting down with one of Hawaii Community College's finest is what I'm calling them

Kumu Pua Rossi is here with me today. Kumu thank you for allowing me your time. I appreciate it, thank you. I'm honored to be here it's an incredible time to be able to sit down with you because I don't think you and I have really had the chance to actually just kind of talk like this so I'm excited because I got a lot of questions for you I want to know I want to start things off by talking about what is specifically it is that you do here now I know you there are I know that you teach Hawaiian studies know you teach a certain specific part of it right right okay so tell me about what exactly you teach

**Pua:**

okay so that's gonna take a little bit of time I have so I teach both the language courses so we have Hawaiian language 101 102 which is beginning and then I teach 201 and 202 which is intermediate okay and then on top of that I also teach wine studies 107 which is sort of your overall culture course kind of an introduction to Hawaiian studies then I have Hawaiian studies 270 with this which is Hawaiian mythology and then I also have all the hula courses on campus so we have about two or three hula courses on campus and that's the Hawaiian studiesHawaiian language but where a lot of people don't realize is that my other courses don't fall under Hawaiian studies discipline it's Hawaiian studies okay but it's just not a Hawaiian studies course in other words I teach religion 205 which is Hawaiian religion history 284 which is

understanding Hawaiian religion or inch hit oh I'm sorry history of the Hawaiian Islands Hawaiian studies 284 K or history 284 K which is history of Hawaii and then anthropology 220 which is pre history of Hawaii my goodness okay so it's such a busy

**Teak:**

I'd say that's an understatement keeping you busy that is an incredible load and by the list that you just went over it sounds like you teach a ton of what is so to speak required for different degrees outside of the hawaiian studies realm as well.

**Pua:**

Right because it's okay there are a lot of requirements that you cover within different degree programs at the great so I've actually had it's been interesting because I've had students that are from automotive I've had nursing students I've had students in the hospitalities industry and often times what's kind of neat about itis that they'll take one class and they'll get really interested in it and then they'll end up double majoring so those students that I mentioned that how the automotive would also double major in Hawaiian studies or go to nursing but

they started off with a Hawaiian studies certificate so it's neat because then we see them going into all these different fields but then they have that Hawaiian Studies background

**Teak:**

Wow that's really impressive and really interesting as you said and something I want to touch on is obviously you being a Kauaian girl so to speak for I didn't race exactly so with you being a born and raised Kauaian girl and you know obviously within the culture itself and growing up in that way you what's the sense of feeling or what's the feeling that you get with the kind of responsibility you have from a cultural standpoint you understand what I'm where I'm kind of going with this on a heavy question

**Pua:**

I know exactly what you're asking me it's interesting because as both kanaka maoli and

somebody who's from here and on top of that being a Professor right you have a lot of different kuleana because you have that kuleana to the school but then in addition you have that kuleana to be kind of a leader in the Hawaiian community as well right and that's not something that's just me feeling like that I think all of the professor's in Hawaii studies throughout all of the universities and the CCS or the community colleges have that same sort of responsibility that they feel that they don't just represent the school they work for but they also represent the Lihue the nation they're representing the children that are coming up and being raised in that way the families that they represent so we have a lot of responsibility or kuleana to to not just be here on campus but to be out there right and to share that knowledge with the with the rest of the community and to try and bring as much as we can to campus and back out again so we really try and be that bridge from campus to community

**Teak:**

That's a really really deep I guess a deep way of or a heavy load or heavy burden in a way so to speak right that you carry because there's so much that you have to or that encompasses all that you do and all the different things that you have to connect so I can't imagine how incredibly I don't know what the right word is almost but incredibly I guess full within your heart and within everything else that you have to bring together then that you have to connect together I mean not only for students but for faculty other faculty members and something that so you really have to be a team not only a team player but a almost like almost like the head coach

of the team so to speak right I think well you may not comment when you said it's a it's a heavy loader or a burden

**Pua:**

I wouldn't use the word burden okay burden it's because it almost makes it feel like you know it's not something that you enjoy but I I'm really blessed I think or privileged to be in this role because I do have a lot of Aloha for the Hawaiian culture I was raised in it right and to have that opportunity to to share that love and to share that knowledge I think it's it's definitely not a burden it's it's just part of who we are right remember and if you love it it's like it's it's not heavy you know what I mean it's not heavy it's a lot it's not definitely don't get misinterpreted or anything

**Teak:**

so I'm glad you cleared that up because definitely I can use some of the wrong

words at some point at some time let's talk about you know what is a great day

in your classroom look like

**Pua:**

Oh that's such a good question it's I like it when I can see students make that connection with what's being taught and they can connect it into their own life or something that they see because a lot of what I teach is because I tend to teach more of the history and the prehistory courses that's past stuff that's happening and so sometimes when a student is taking that class it's like how is this relevant to me and then when I see them make that connection and they they

realize ok what I'm learning in class is totally relevant to what I'm gonna do when I walk out this classroom door that is a perfect day or even just something as simple as because I like to take students out if we're out and they're there telling me their stories or they're telling me about what they want to do when they when they leave campus just making that connection that to me

is another great example of a good class day it's just making those connections and you just talked about something.

**Teak:**

That was very interesting you like taking them your students out so is it safe to save for folks who are wondering and folks that are thinking about coming into the Hawaiian Studies program that your classroom goes quite far beyond the four walls of the classroom

**Pua:**

We try to it's not always easy because so you always have to deal with transportation

or they got work before or work after so we try to so I at least tried to one at the very least okay just get out of the classroom it doesn't have to be anything strenuous for example if it's a history class maybe checking out the museum if it's my pre history class if we're talking about the fish ponds it's awesome but it's really cool if you can actually go and see a fish mound so to

me that's that's yeah if you're gonna take one of my classes expect to leave class at least once be ready to work

**Teak:**

I think yes the is the is the census I get and I've been able to sit and watch you teach just slightly that I can remember and it was right in the beginning when I embarked on my journey here Kauai Community College and the one thing that I know that I love about watching you teach is you're very confident in everything that you have to teach and say you definitely are not afraid to make sure that students know you're not only coming from an educational background but you also lived it you also were brought up in it in the actual culture itself right so I think that that's something that gives credit not only to you but to the students in the sense that they can make a personal connection with you yeah and I think that's right I was just gonna say can you talk about how important it is for you as an instructor to make a little bit more of a personal connection maybe with your students

**Pua:**

Oh that's that's the main thing to me you know in today's world now we're doing a lot more

online courses and for me that's a little bit difficult because I really like that face-to-face interaction I like that personal connection and the reason for that is because I actually got my educational start at koi Community College you did so my parents made a really interesting decision to home-school me so I never actually went to any kind of formal school interesting and they did it at a time when it was really didn't do home school like nobody did what is this right so it was kind of crazy at the time and because of the fact that both my parents are Hawaiian they're both conical moly they wanted to have me learn you know traditional Western curriculum but then also incorporate Hawaiian history and Hawaiian values in Hawaiian culture so I got kind of the best of both worlds but I'd never actually had a formal education so when I graduated I came to KCC because it would be easy right right start off kind of slow and get test the

waters so I came here and I went only part-time the first year but I loved it I absolutely loved it and it was honestly one of the best parts of my life because of the fact that you have these teachers that are that cared about you they knew your names right they as soon as they found out that I was interested in Hawaiian studies they they sort of like just really encouraged that kind of fan the flames if you will and if there was something that was relevant to what I was studying they'd let me know about it so that connection that they made with me helped me on my educational path so after I graduated from here and I had to leave the island and I went to Hawaii Island of Hawaii and finished up I knew I always wanted to come back to KCC because I got so much from it I wanted to give back.

**Teak:**

Wow and so for me that student connection is everything because I think that's what helped me to succeed I know that's what helped me to succeed so if I can even just get one student so like

look back at their time at KCC and say that was one of the best times of my life and I had just even a small hand in that to me that's everything that's awesome that's incredible and I actually

didn't know that about you so thank you for sharing that because that means a lot just to me as well as our audience I'm sure to be able to connect with you on a little bit more of a personal level speaking of that let's talk about a little bit more of your journey specifically so you actually did go over to what was au h Hilo UHG though okay so you've got your you finished your teaching credentials there

**Pua:**

well I finished I got two degrees so I got a degree in Hawaiian studies and a degree in anthropology Wow and then I moved home and I applied for the master's program in Hawaiian studies at UAH Manoa okay but they were it was kind of new I think it was only about a year old when I got into it and so they allowed for a couple of us to live on our islands and do it distance so I came home and I did Kapaa middle school I taught Hawaiian immersion at Kapaa middle school for one year but again my dream was always KCC and they never had a position open here and so I think I must have been at Kapaa middle school for maybe half a year at

position opened up for the first time and I don't know how many years and I didn't have the credentials because I didn't have a master's degree I was in the process of okay so I said well I'll just apply I really didn't think I was gonna get it I'm just gonna apply and it was definitely intimidating to walk into your interview with all of your former professors interviewing you but luckily I think that's actually what gave me an edge was because they knew who I was and they knew what I was capable of and I got a call it wasn't a Chancellor so I got a call saying you got

the job and I've been here ever since I think this is about 13 years I was just gonna ask him I was yeah I was about I mean some of my college students coming in were my age and I remember a few of them looking at me like are you the teacher the student so that even took a

little bit of you know cuz you kind of had to prove to them right you knew your stuff because to have people come in that knew you from baby kind days or small kid time and coming and going

you're our teacher and we really had to and when you spoke about being confident

it was you really had to prove in the beginning like right now I know my stuff I do I'm your teacher I promise you know there's nothing more

**Teak:**

I think is more incredible than being able to show coming full circle as you have because

you know like you said Kauai Community College specifically gave you the foundation to be able to move on and go on that journey I'll come back and do it and that's got to be an amazing feeling and I know you talked about that a little little bit already for students that are coming through high school and are wondering what they're gonna do would you agree even into these current times I guess if you all would you still say Kauai Community College Community College in general is the best way to start .

**Pua:**

I surely believe so the reason I say that is because it it just gives you

that really solid Foundation we've got great teachers here we've got really good classes and you know I know these teachers they want the best out of their students actually and they want to give them the best they want to make them critical thinkers they want to make them leaders in the community they want to give them opportunities that they might not otherwise have but I definitely think this place is such a good starting point to just prepare you for anything I mean I I don't want to say that I wouldn't have done well if I went straight to heat'll but I think I would have been a less confident person and it would have been a real struggle I think for myself had I not done it the way that I did it.

**Teak:**

I don't want to cut you off but I want to just touch on this do you think that well not do you think was going from KCC to you h hilo did it make things at you h hilo i don't want to see a breeze i bet that's not the case but you'd like you said it must have made a huge difference in the way things went at hilo.

**Pua:**

Absolutely okay i think if i had gone right when I graduated I mean just already the having to move to a new island mhm and it's just a few you know it's only a few hundred miles away but being a Kauaian girl like don't make me go but already having to deal with the new

island living on your own you don't have mommy and daddy there living on your own having to navigate that world in itself is a lot and then on top of that you're learning how to become a college student I know I think the way that I did it was definitely the way to go because I knew how to be a successful college student right all I had to worry about when I got there was more about okay how do I be successful on my own did it very cool perspective very cool to hear that now.

**Teak:**

I don't want to get away from this but I want to kind of touch a little bit more on the curriculumso to speak in your class you were you know we were talking about all the different aspects that you teach and I think one and I very well could be wrong but I think one of the important things within Hawaiian culture and I think it's being taught here so to speak is sustainability.

**Pua:**

Yes and being that being such an important subject within hawaii culture can you touch on that to any degree as far as what may be going on in the hawaiian studies program or to the level that you guys teach it and so on sustainability is such an important part of what we're doing because one of the things that a nice I mentioned I'm teaching a lot of history courses so

again it's like looking at the past but that's important because recently for example in my on through policy course they're learning about the food production systems like fish pond and we watched a video that was put out gosh a few years ago and it talked about how we really only impacted about 15 percent of Hawaii's systems well and yet we were a hundred percent

sustainable and yet today it's almost like the opposite and it really got that class talking about the fact that if we were not if we don't look at how we're producing our food and where things are coming from if something were to ever happen and we'd be cut off we just have a few days absolutely storage but our kupuna showed us that it was absolutely I mean absolutely achievable for us to be a hundred percent sustainable it's not impossible so we have to look at

that we have to look at how they modeled it and then we have to kind of adjust it to what our needs are today so where we really are looking at sustainability and how we can be using the practices of our kupuna in today's world in today's context the local er the fish pond being

one of them here being another one of them so as I mentioned students will learn about these systems but I go there I take them there so they can see what's happening and how they can get involved but we definitely talk about it I'm part of the sustainability committee we Hawaiian studies has always been really activated and like our Earth Month activities right and just getting

the discussion you know what's happening and what can we do and Hawaiian studies definitely

lays that foundation I mean Hawaiian studies and the culture is all about sustainability and it's just taking that practice and implementing it in today's world

**Teak:**

I can't begin to put the words how incredible it is to be able to hear you talk about it because I can tell that you're passionate about it and it's something that you truly care about and it's something that you truly want to get your students involved in and have that same passion when they leave the classroom and I think it's obvious that Kauai Community College as an institution is very much involved in trying to create a much more sustainable and I think that's a great thing and I think you know everything that you guys are doing from the department standpoint to just getting people involved and we're not there's absolutely incredible I mean I don't know how much we always say there's room for improvement right but I don't know how much more I mean there's you guys are doing an incredible job over there well at this point I think I've taken enough of your time today I want to thank you so much cool for being here and for allowing me the opportunity to sit and talk with you there's been incredible and I hope that we get to do this again soon!

**Pua:**

Thank you this was fun!

**Outro:**

Thank you for listening to the class act at Kauai Community College the views and opinions

shared by the host and any guests are solely theirs and do not reflect the feelings or opinions of cool College is an institution if you enjoyed listening to this podcast miss our professor check out the other episodes with different professors. Aloha!