The architectural design for the University of Hawai‘i at Hilo Ka Haka ‘Ula O Ke‘elikolani College of Hawaiian Language Building received the 2010 American Institute of Architects (AIA) Honolulu Design Award at the AIA Honolulu, 2010 Annual Design Awards Ceremony held in July.

The CHL design topped eight other entries to win the "Commissioned Work to be Built" category by receiving the highest marks in all areas.

In evaluating each entry, the judges looked for a high level of design resolution that showed exemplary skill and sensitivity in formal function, technical and artistic requirements, advanced contemporary understanding of design by proposing new approaches to the development of architectural form, and considered the project’s complexity with regard to budget constraints, site difficulties and program requirements.

Dr. Debra Fitzsimons, vice chancellor for administrative affairs, said the award is a well-deserved honor that recognizes the efforts of the working group who took up the challenge of producing the design.

“The College of Hawaiian Language Building Design Committee was comprised of faculty, staff, and AIA consultants who immersed themselves in the process of understanding native Hawaiian culture, language and values,” Fitzsimons said.

“Through this intense understanding, the architects succeeded in genuinely reflecting these important elements and more in the building’s design that is not only aesthetic, but achieves a high level of functionality.”

Dr. Kalena Silva, director of Ka Haka ‘Ula O Ke'elikolani, said the design for the new building was based on input from five faculty members who worked closely with architectural, project management and UH Hilo representatives.

Their role was to help the architects gain a thorough understanding of the program, cultural, space, and technological needs and dreams of the College.

“O ka ‘olelo ke ka’a o ka mauli (Language is the fiber that binds us to our cultural identity),” Silva said. “With this understanding, they (WCIT Architects) were able to successfully incorporate unique design features that not only serve the College’s programs, but also strongly resonate with the Hawaiian language and culture, the building’s location in Hilo and the life of Princess Ruth Ke‘elikolani, after whom the College is named.”

WCIT Architects produced a PowerPoint presentation depicting the new facility's features, including its spectacular landscape, mountain and ocean views, and designs reflecting the host culture and Big Island’s natural resources. To view online: http://www.uhh.hawaii.edu/uhh/planning/uploads/HawaiianLanguageCollege_pres_220.pdf

During the past legislative session, state lawmakers approved $28 million in construction funding to establish a permanent home for the College that would house all operations in one location solely dedicated to teaching Hawaiian language, history and culture.