

Vivian Kunimitsu

Professor of Child Development



Vivian Kunimitsu insists that every student, regardless of his or her major, should take a child development course.

"The source of many of our society's problems can be traced directly back to the home and family life, particularly to parenting skills," says Kunimitsu. "Where do adults get the knowledge and training that will enable them to understand the development of a child? Where do they learn how to create a communicative, responsive environment that will enable a child to grow up feeling like a worthy person who is able to cope and contribute to society? A child development course, particularly one that focuses on the developing child in the context of the family, can offer some very valuable and practical insights into important aspects of parent-child relationships."

Kunimitsu admits that students may get

information about children in various courses, such as education and psychology. "But a basic child development course in home economics integrates research on children from a number of disciplines, including home economics, and applies it in a relevant way to the child in the family setting," she says. "It will also help you to understand yourself better, as well as others."

Kunimitsu has been involved with children on many different levels. In addition to being the mother of two teenage daughters, she has opened two nursery schools, participated in research dealing with the gifted preschool child, and taught both undergraduate and graduate child development courses. Last year, the School of Agriculture and Home Economics awarded her the prestigious Salgo-Noren Award for Outstanding Teacher of the Year. Currently, she is

the graduate coordinator for the Family Studies and Home Economics Department and the adviser for the Interdisciplinary Child Development major.

Q: What does the study of child development involve?

A: The key concept is "development." Development implies progression and change. As applied to the study of the child, the changes that are studied are those in the physical, social, emotional, cognitive, and creative developmental areas that make up the "whole child." We study theories and the application of these theories to contemporary parenting and societal issues. Of necessity, the study of the child begins at conception and continues into adulthood. The topics that are often raised for discussion are those pertaining to alternative family structures