Encouraging students to pursue “the thrill of the chase” wherever it might lead them personally and professionally, Fannie Mae Executive Vice President and General Counsel Beth Wilkinson (below) delivered the keynote address at the School of Law’s Hooding Ceremony on May 16.

The 246 members of the Class of 2008 received the hoods denoting completion of their Juris Doctor degrees before 1,200 friends and family assembled at the Joseph P. Meyerhoff Symphony Hall. Class presidents Jeff Knight and Anna Kuperstein announced that more than 70 members of the class made gifts to create an endowment that will provide funds for future annual student community service and pro bono projects.

After the ceremony, graduates received their diplomas at the University of Maryland, Baltimore’s Commencement Exercises.
Making His Mark

Aaron Gavant has had a front-row seat on some influential rulings.

Second-year law student Aaron Gavant was sitting in his Evidence class one day when talk turned to a recent ruling by Baltimore County Circuit Judge Susan M. Souder that made national headlines. She had ruled that fingerprint evidence, accepted as forensic proof for nearly a century, was not reliable enough to be used against a homicide defendant who faced a possible death sentence.

"Hey, that's my judge," Gavant remembers saying to classmates sitting nearby. The moment offered him the chance to marry the theory he was learning in class with his real-world experience in the courtroom: Gavant had interned for Souder the preceding summer as she prepared the case. Though he assisted the judge by doing research into relevant case law, when he left to return to classes in the fall, he says, "I didn't know which way she was going to come down."

In the aftermath of Souder's controversial ruling in October 2007, Gavant wrote a letter to the editor, published in the Baltimore Sun, defending her decision. Fingerprint forensics are highly subjective, he noted, pointing to the recent case of American lawyer Brandon Mayfield, who was falsely connected to the Madrid bombings based on fingerprint evidence. Yet jurors are "very likely to believe a fingerprint expert who says a particular set of prints belongs to a particular defendant," he wrote.

Gavant, who was named as runner-up Best Oralist in this year's Morris Brown Myerowitz Moot Court Competition at the school, followed up on his experience in Judge Souder's courtroom with a spring semester internship with the Honorable Richard Bennett, at the U.S. District Court for the District of Maryland. "It's a very different experience working in the federal courts versus the state," he says. "While there are fewer cases on the docket, I've been more involved in helping to draft opinions." A summa cum laude graduate of Yeshiva University, Gavant worked approximately 10-12 hours a week for Bennett as part of an Asper Fellowship, which also included half a dozen classroom sessions and allowed him to earn academic credit.

Over the summer, Gavant explored the world of business law by serving as a summer associate at Mayer Brown's Chicago office. He's calling on that summer experience now as he begins work as an editor for the Journal of Business Technology Law.

A husband and father of two young children (his second arrived just last spring), Gavant says that finding balance in his busy life these days has become "a fine art." —SD
Students Make Winning Arguments

As the final round of the 39th Annual Myerowitz Moot Court Competition began on March 12, several former champions took seats of honor in the Ceremonial Courtroom. Their ranks soon grew by two: by one, when 1980 Myerowitz champion, Deborah Sweet Eyler of the Maryland Court of Special Appeals took her seat on the bench as a judge in this year’s final round, and by another when Brian Robinson ’09 was declared this year’s winner.

“We have the enviable job of saying this was a wonderful presentation by all of you,” said The Hon. John Bates ’76 of the U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia, who joined Judge Eyler and Chief Judge Robert Bell of the Maryland Court of Appeals in judging the competition. “And we have the enviable task of picking two of you who are the winners.”

Aaron Gavant ’09 was named runner-up and Kerry Cooperman ’09 received the award for Best Brief. For more information about this year’s competition and oral advocacy, see p. 28.

A SUPREME Event

In November, 11 graduates of the School of Law were admitted to the Bar of the Supreme Court of the United States. Professor Robert Percival, a former clerk to U.S. Supreme Court Justice Byron R. White, was on hand to help celebrate the occasion. The graduates were (l-r): David McClintock, Marion S. Alley, Jr., Orlando Barnes, Leo Wallace, Tammi D. Jackson, Prof. Percival, Tracy White, Susan Euteneuer, Yaakov Spatz, Christopher Kirkman, William Castelli, and Robin Jensen.

Celebrating Women Leaders

Since the inception of the law school’s Women, Leadership & Equality Program in 2003, 33 students have been designated Rose Zetzer Fellows. Third-year students who demonstrate a strong intellectual interest in and commitment to women’s issues, these Fellows participate in a workshop that provides training in professional skills, do externships with organizations that work on women’s policy issues, and assist faculty research. On April 3, Fellows past and present gathered to celebrate the WLE Program’s fifth anniversary. This year’s Fellows, with WLE Program founding director Paula Monopoli and Dean Rothenberg, were (l-r): Nina Schichor, Elizabeth Crook, Jennifer Katz, Adena Laufer, and Ellen Smith.
Craig Thompson ‘95, a partner with Venable, talk show host and author, delivered the keynote address as the Black Law Students Association’s 33rd annual banquet encouraged all in attendance to become leaders with purpose.

The A.J. Cooper Award, named in honor of BLSA’s national founder and given each year to an outstanding graduating student, was presented to Janelle Nicholas. William C. Murphy, Jr. ’69, presented the Murphy Scholarship to Radiance Walters ’09. N. Gordon Knox ’98 was recognized as Alumnus of the Year. Ada Lash-Booker ’86 received the Practitioner of the Year Award. and Brenda Bratton Blom was named Professor of the Year.

Auction Supports Summer Public Interest Work for Students

The lucky winners got lunch with Dean Karen Rothenberg or actress Kate Mulgrew, a week in a Martha’s Vineyard cottage, or hundreds of other items up for bid. But the community at large got much more, as the Maryland Public Interest Law Project (MPILP) annual auction raised funds to support summer grants for students to pursue public interest work.

The auction also honored Professor Doug Colbert and students Michelle Mendez ’08 and Sarah Novak ’09. Professor Colbert was recognized for leading student members of the Katrina Project in providing legal services in the Gulf Coast region, and for his ongoing support of MPILP. Mendez has been an active member of MPILP and recently began her legal career as an Equal Justice Works Fellow at CASA of Maryland. Novak, an MPILP student leader, was instrumental in recruiting law students to participate in pro bono work at Project Heal.

MPILP funded 27 summer grants this year, enabling students to receive $5,000 for ten weeks of summer work at local public interest programs, such as the Maryland Disability Law Center, Legal Aid, and many others.
The School of Law’s annual Reunion continued to grow in popularity as almost 300 Maryland Law alumni, family and friends gathered at the law school on Saturday, April 12, for an evening of dinner, dancing, and reminiscing. Graduates took tours of the facility to acquaint themselves with the School of Law today, and assisted in faculty research by completing online surveys about career paths and satisfaction. The Class of 1958 took top honors for having the greatest percentage of class members in attendance and in making an annual gift to the law school. The Class of 2003 had the most members attend.
More than 100 graduates gathered at the School of Law on March 6 for the Alumni Association's 17th annual Honors Banquet. This year's Distinguished Graduate Award was presented to Congressman Elijah Cummings '76. The Honorable Andre Davis '78, who has served on the U.S. Court for the District of Maryland since 1995, received the Benjamin L. Cardin Public Service Award, and Bernard Manekin '36 received the Star Award in recognition of his lifetime of contributions to the law school and the greater community. Congressman Cummings was featured in the 2006 issue of JD.
Businessman with a Social Conscience
Bernard Manekin '36 helped drive Baltimore's transformation from a manufacturing center to a center of business and financial services.

If there is such a thing as the American Dream, Bernard Manekin '36 has lived it. When he was in his early 20s during the Great Depression, Manekin, the son of Jewish immigrants from Lithuania, worked at the Marlboro (MD) Shirt Factory for $6 per week. But looking past the factory walls, he noticed, "the people who had the best jobs were well educated and well trained."

Manekin was the first—and only—of five children to continue his education beyond high school. His parents were supportive, he says, "as long as I held down a full-time job." After graduating from Baltimore City College, he went on to earn an LLB from the School of Law in 1936. But he practiced law only briefly.

Harold started a company, now known as Manekin LLC, that has become one of the largest full-service commercial real estate companies in the region, offering brokerage, property management, construction, development and consulting services. The company has also done several projects that involve adaptive re-use. The 1971 Rotunda project, for example, created an office and retail complex within the walls of what was once the Maryland Casualty Company headquarters.

Manekin says he made good use of his law degree—not just in the areas of property law and contracts. "Law school taught me how to think, how to analyze problems and how to develop thoughtful responses," he says. In fact, he encouraged his son Robert, who runs the brokerage and investment services division at Manekin, LLC, to attend law school (Maryland '73).

"Baltimore has totally changed in my lifetime, and much of the change has been for the better."

play a major role in the city's transformation from a manufacturing center to one of business and financial services.

Manekin received the Star Award at the Alumni Association's 17th annual Honors Banquet on March 6. The award recognizes "unsung heroes" among UM Law graduates: those who have quietly but diligently advanced the highest ideals of the legal profession.

In 1945, Manekin and his brother Manekin, LLC, to attend law school (Maryland '73).

Throughout his career, Manekin has been committed to giving back to the community. He was the first chairman of the Maryland Economic Development Commission, and chaired the boards of The Walters Art Gallery and the Associated Jewish Charities of Baltimore. He is also one of the founders of the Institute for Christian-Jewish Studies.

Politically, Manekin "was ahead of his time," says Maryland Law Professor Larry Gibson, who first met Manekin in 1967, when Gibson was directing the Supreme Bench campaign of Joseph C. Howard. "Bernie was a businessman with a social conscience, and understood the significance of diversity at all levels of government."

Manekin was a frequent contributor to campaigns of African-American candidates, including Kurt Schmoke's bid for Baltimore City state's attorney in 1982, and later his successful mayoral campaign.

Manekin, now 94, continues to pay regular visits to downtown Baltimore and says he can't believe his eyes. "Baltimore has totally changed in my lifetime, and much of the change has been for the better." And has the American Dream changed? "I sincerely believe that it is alive and well," says Manekin. "Why do you think people still risk their lives to get into the United States? The same reason they risked their lives and left their homes 100 years ago."

—Martha Thomas
Of there is a connecting theme to Judge Andre Davis' career, it is his passion for teaching and public service, with a parallel line that reflects his commitment to the rule of law.

Davis '78, a U.S. District Court Judge for the Maryland District since 1995, maintains an active life of service to the community—both locally and internationally. An adjunct professor at UMLaw, he was honored with the law school's 2008 Benjamin L. Cardin Public Service Award in March.

After receiving his JD from Maryland (where he won the prestigious Roger Howell Award and Best Advocate in the Myerowitz Moot Court), Davis clerked for two different judges—Frank A. Kaufman on the U.S. District Court in Baltimore and Francis D. Murnaghan, Jr., on the U.S. Court of Appeals. He recalls that working for judges showed him how difficult the job could be. "I would never run from hard work," he says, "but I felt I wanted to be a lawyer arguing in front of a great judge, helping them to decide cases in my favor."

It wasn't until the 1980s, when Davis began teaching full time at Maryland that his perspective shifted. "I came to see the role of the judge as a teacher," he says.

Elisabeth Walden, a clerk in his office, says that Davis has the demeanor of a teacher when sitting on the bench. Working with pro se cases, she says, "he shows extraordinary patience" for those without legal representation. "If someone has a legitimate claim, but it happens to be buried under the wrong language, he makes every effort to help bring it to light."

A judge, says Davis, "can't be fixated on language. If an unrepresented person makes an argument that comports with the law, the language he or she uses shouldn't matter."

While he dreamed of becoming a civil rights lawyer, and worked briefly for the Justice Department following his clerkships, Davis says that his role as a mentor and role model to African-American students has in part made up for that dream deferred. He was recently heartened to hear a former student on an alumni panel credit him with inspiring her to stay with the law.

And when Walden was struggling to choose an area of law to pursue, she says, "we sat down over a cup of tea and discussed the options, and he shared his own experiences."

Davis has served as president of Big Brothers/Big Sisters of Central Maryland and for 10 years has been chair and member of the board of Community Law in Action, Inc., a law school-affiliated leadership development program for high school students. He is also chair of the board of the Baltimore Urban Debate League and serves on the board of OSI-Baltimore.

Lately, Davis has been taking his passion to the world at large. He is a member of the Judicial Conference of the United States' Committee on International Judicial Relations, the Einstein Institute for Science, Health and the Courts, and the Federal Judicial Center. As a participant in international judicial education seminars and "Rule of Law" programs, he has lectured in Canada, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia, Ukraine, Armenia, Italy, Poland, Kosovo, Mali, Tanzania and Swaziland.

Technology allows him to participate in these international programs while keeping up with his work in Baltimore. Thanks to the remote network he accesses through his laptop computer, he says, "no matter where I am in the world, I'm at my desk. I've filed opinions from hotel rooms all over the world. My nickname is cyberjudge."

"I've filed opinions from hotel rooms all over the world. My nickname is cyberjudge."

—Martha Thomas