The first Orthodox Jewish woman to be appointed as a District Court Judge in Maryland, Karen Friedman ’97 is also one of the youngest members of the University of Maryland Law Alumni Board. Moreover, she has a Presidential appointment to the Executive Advisory Council of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, D.C.

Friedman, a native of Brooklyn, N.Y., wanted to be a lawyer from an early age. She participated in a program that combined her senior year at University of Maryland Baltimore County and her first year at UM Law school.

During her second year of law school, Friedman took a six-month hiatus for motherhood. “The school was wonderfully accommodating. It was difficult to go back but I knew, the longer I waited, the more difficult it would be,” says Friedman, who has two sets of twins, one set born during, and the other after, law school.

After a stint in a general law firm, Friedman was appointed in 2001 by then-Governor Parris Glendening to fill the unexpired term of a judge on the Baltimore City Orphans’ Court. Friedman finished out the term, and then was elected twice to the position.

In 2010, Gov. Martin O’Malley appointed Friedman as an Associate Judge on the District Court of Maryland, Baltimore City, a position for which she applied and went through a long process that involved an extensive application and multiple interviews.

“But basically, it’s the court the majority of citizens have any contact with,” she says of District Court.

Her cases run the gamut from bail reviews and contract disputes to domestic violence and traffic tickets. “I sit alone. It’s all bench trials, no juries,” says Friedman, who rotates among five different locations and averages 50 to 60 cases per day.

In addition to her law school involvement as an Alumni Board member, Friedman has served since 2007 as an adjunct professor, teaching a first-year required course on written and oral advocacy.

As a judge, “I write opinions and advocate for my position,” says Friedman, whose goal is to teach her students those skills. “Identifying issues, making a critical analysis and legal writing—that’s the course I teach.”