When the Class of 2004 began at the School of Law, the world was a much different place. It was a pre-September 11 America with a strong economy and seemingly unlimited job prospects.

“They’re graduating under different circumstances than they imagined,” says Torma Mayer, JD ’91, associate dean for career services. “But I’m impressed with the way they’ve persevered. They’ve risen to the challenge, and they’ve stayed enthusiastic.”

In fact, Mayer says enthusiasm sets this class with its 220 graduating JD students apart: They’re passionate about the law, dedicated to public service, interested in giving back to the community. “Even students who are interested in working for a firm want pro bono work to play into their careers,” she observes.

Like other classes, they represent a variety of backgrounds—ethnic, economic, geographic. Many will return to their hometowns of New York and Washington, D.C., but some are Midwestern converts, says Mayer.

She also observes, “Academically, our students keep getting stronger and stronger. And in the Class of 2004, there are such nice people, collegial students who value respect and hard work. Really a great class.”

Allen Blaustein, JD ’04

Before law school, Allen Blaustein spent his days reporting news and entertainment for an NBC station in Texas. He loved the pace, the writing, the thrill of deadline journalism. But he also made an unexpected discovery: He loved the law as well.

“Part of my job was to report legal stories, including observing courtroom proceedings and interviewing law enforcement officials,” Blaustein says. “I became fascinated with the legal system. One of the reasons I decided to go to law school was because I wanted to influence the outcome of the story, not just report on it.”

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With a bachelor’s degree in Italian from Indiana University, Toby Clark finished his undergraduate career with no particular direction. “I didn’t know what to do,” he says. “So I took the first job offer I got and worked as a claims resolver for a health insurance firm.”

He opted for only six months in that field, but it spurred him to look into jobs in an area that held long been curious about: the legal profession. After landing a position in a Chicago law firm, Clark grew enamored with business law.

Serendipity led him to speak with a group of Washington University alumni who touted the School of Law’s joint JD/MBA program. “They said not only was it a great school, but it was very student centered,” says Clark. So he enrolled in the School’s four-year, joint-degree program, with his mind set on pursuing a career in finance or investment banking. He figured the law degree would boost his success and marketability.

But after his second year, Clark had a change of heart about his career plans: “I found out I loved the law. It really grabbed my heart, just tackling the fine line between different aspects of the law, arguing policy. I completely

Toby Clark, JD/MBA ’04

What Blaustein most appreciates about the School is the faculty’s open-door approach. “The faculty were always exceptionally forthcoming with both their time and assistance,” says Blaustein. “They helped to make law school a great experience.”

Blaustein now has that opportunity clerking for Judge James I. Cohn, United States District Court for the Southern District of Florida. “A clerkship offers a high level of responsibility and the opportunity to contribute to the judicial system,” he says. “It’s very rewarding.”

He decided to pursue a clerkship upon graduation after his “excellent experiences” in a judicial internship his second year and in the Judicial Clerkship Clinic his third year. In his second year, Blaustein interned with Judge David D. Noce, United States District Court for the Eastern District of Missouri. Then, for his clinic experience, he interned with Judge Theodore McMillian, United States Court of Appeals for the Eighth Circuit. He says he found that he was well prepared for both internships: “My studies at the School of Law ensured I was up to the task.”

Blaustein is grateful for the opportunities provided by the School of Law. After his first year, a public interest summer stipend enabled him to work at the United States Attorney’s Office in the Eastern District of New York. “That job gave me an outstanding insight into the way in which the government prosecutes a criminal case,” he says.

After his second year, he spent a summer merging journalism and law, analyzing legal issues for the FOX news channel in New York City. “It was great being able to put all of my legal and journalism experience to use at the same job,” he says.

A New York native, Blaustein received his journalism degree from Boston University. In law school, he was drawn to classes that relied heavily on research and writing, such as the Appellate Brief Writing Seminar, and to moot court competitions.

"I found out I loved the law. It really grabbed my heart, just tackling the fine line between different aspects of the law, arguing policy.”

Toby Clark
turned around, and now I’m going in through the legal side.”

With his two degrees in hand, Clark is spending a year clerking for Judge Adlai S. Hardin, United States Bankruptcy Court for the Southern District of New York. From there he’ll join the bankruptcy department of Paul, Weiss, Rifkind, Wharton & Garrison LLP in New York City.

While both positions carry enormous responsibility, Clark feels prepared, crediting the School’s strong grounding in legal research and writing and in its clinics. “In the clinical program, you’re thrown in the middle of things. Though it’s overwhelming at first, it helped me understand and balance that stress and responsibility,” he says.

Through the Civil Rights & Community Justice Clinic, he worked at the American Civil Liberties Union. He was responsible for everything from interviewing potential clients to presenting their cases to the ACLU board.

“The clinic program, with its vast array of choices, is something Washington University does very well,” he says.

One of Clark’s passions is volunteering. While pursuing his degrees the last four years, he volunteered for the HIV Vaccine Trials Network, which strives to ensure that communities affected by HIV have a voice in medical trials seeking a vaccine.

In fact, one reason Clark chose Paul, Weiss is its strong commitment to pro bono work: “That’s important to me.”

Jennifer Tyus, JD ’04

Growing up, Jennifer Tyus had a flair for verbal debate, causing her parents to suggest a career as a lawyer. So, at the tender age of eight, she decided that’s what she would be when she grew up.

“I was the youngest of three, argumentative, and always sticking up for people who wouldn’t do it themselves. Law seemed like a good career for me.”

The dream seemed especially possible because of special encouragement. Tyus’ mother gave her a book about Barbara Jordan, the first African American to represent Texas in the United States House of Representatives. Tyus was so moved by this account of an African-American woman in a position of real power that she wrote Jordan a letter detailing her dream to study law.

“I was the youngest of three, argumentative, and always sticking up for people who wouldn’t do it themselves. Law seemed like a good career for me.”

Jennifer Tyus

After graduating with a degree in political science from Washington University, Tyus stayed true to her course and enrolled in the School of Law. With an eye toward litigation, she focused on such classes as Critical Jurisprudence and Lawyering for Social Justice.

“The thinking skills I developed in those classes were invaluable,” says Tyus, an Illinois native. “They forced me to look at a legal issue from a variety of perspectives.”

While studying law, she was president of the School’s Black Law Students Association, an editor on the Washington University Global Studies Law Review, and a member of the Women’s Law Caucus.

She also completed a clerkship with Judge Gerald Cohn, United States District Court for the Southern District of Illinois. Tyus worked on cases involving Social Security disability and prisoner rights. “I understood that many of the prisoners did horrible things, but I couldn’t help looking at their whole life picture,” she says. “It was fascinating. I loved that clerkship.”
Shino Uenuma, LLM ’04

As a practicing attorney for six years in Japan, Shino Uenuma grew increasingly disconcerted by her country’s lax cyberspace laws, especially Japan’s lack of Internet laws specifically protecting children.

Like most attorneys in Japan, she handled various legal work, ranging from divorce to patents. Uenuma also belonged to a nonprofit organization overseeing Internet troubles and to the Children’s Rights Committee of the Japanese Federal Bar Associations. “Through those groups, I heard about such statutes as the U.S. Children’s Internet Protection Act and other related laws,” she says. “I wanted to study in the United States to become more knowledgeable about cyber-space law.”

She first heard about the School of Law’s LLM program in United States law through her boss, who had received a brochure. From there, Uenuma researched United States schools on the Web, deciding on this law school because of its student-centered reputation. “I wanted a school where I knew I would be able to talk with faculty openly and learn as much as I could about your legal system,” she says.

Uenuma found her biggest obstacle in the United States to be the language barrier. “In law school, the discussion plays an important role,” she says. “It was sometimes difficult to keep up.”

She helped break that barrier for others by teaching Legal Japanese to two Washington University students pursuing joint JD and MA in East Asian studies degrees. She also created a Web page in Japanese to introduce the School to Japanese attorneys interested in the program here.

As part of her LLM degree, Uenuma took such courses as Children & the Law, Cyberspace Law, and Copyright & Related Rights. Her goal was to gain a solid understanding of United States law.

“These courses really helped me understand the differences between our societies,” she says. “U.S. laws about children in cyberspace are much stricter than Japan’s, not only relating to children as ‘objects,’ such as with child pornography, but also to children as users of the Internet.”

The problem in Japan, she continues, is that such laws are relatively new. The field of child protection is untested there, and the legal system hasn’t yet caught up with society’s needs. For instance, there are laws prohibiting child pornography on the Internet, but not those related to children as Internet users.

Now Uenuma hopes to work in the United States for a year, and then return to Japan to focus on strengthening cyberspace laws, especially those protecting children.

“It’s been a great learning experience,” she sums up.