

The Faces of Maryland's Future Leaders

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The School of Law is looking for a few good leaders. Not just the brightest students but those who possess uncommon abilities to rise above and become leaders in the law school and the legal profession. Through a novel approach, all incoming students are considered for a Leadership Scholar Award, a merit-based scholarship given for leadership potential as well as good academic performance and financial need.

Interim Dean Karen Rothenberg attests that "These are extraordinary students diverse in their talents and interests. This new scholarship program recognizes the potential value these students will bring to the life of the law school."

"I've always been active in extracurricular activities," says Shara Boonshaft, a first-year student. As an undergraduate at College Park, Boonshaft volunteered with the Domestic Violence Center of Howard County and the Grassroots Homeless Shelter. Her role as a community activist, coupled with an exceptional academic record, led to her selection as one of the School of Law's first Leadership Scholars.

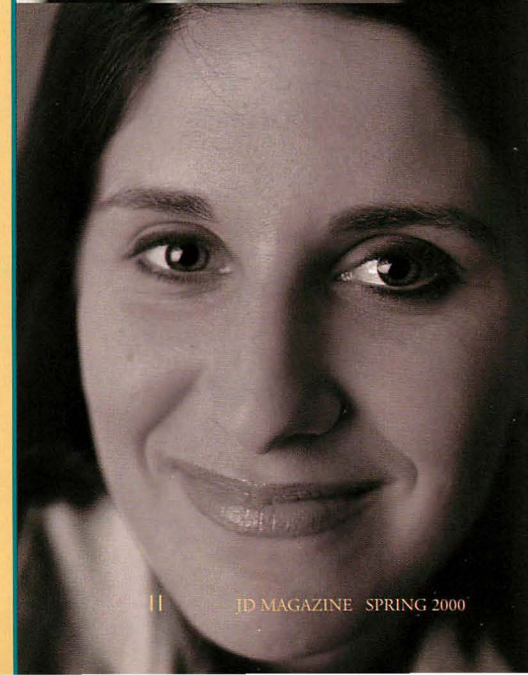
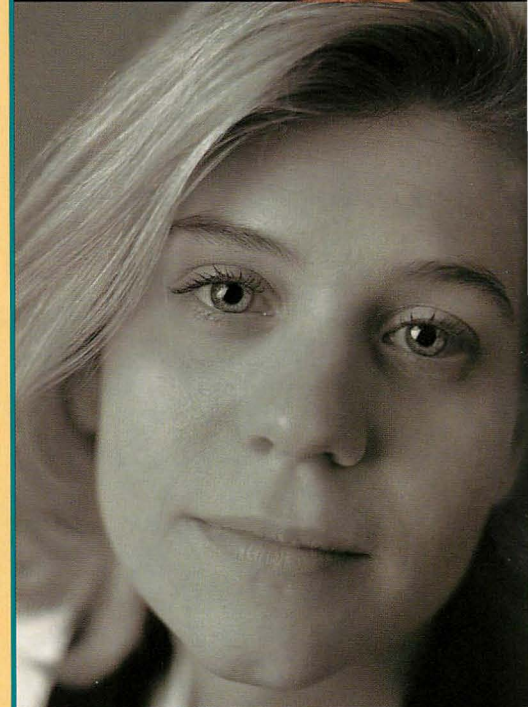
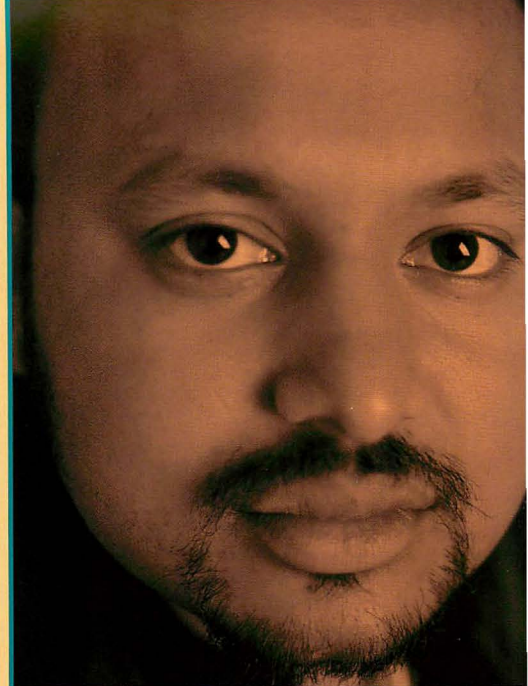
"This new scholarship program recognizes the potential value these students will bring to the life of the law school."

Boonshaft is one of 13 first-year students who received scholarship monies based on merit and future leadership potential. The program is a departure from the standard policy of awarding scholarships based strictly on financial need. Jim Forsyth, associate dean for admissions and registration, explains that, in the past, the School followed federal guidelines for determining need, and funds were distributed according to a formula.

But in the early 1990s, the environment changed. Applications to U.S. law schools dropped from 100,000 to 65,000 while the number of law schools rose, thus changing the marketplace for legal education. "Other law schools have similar scholarships that recognize merit as well as need," Forsyth notes. The selection committee regards a student's academic potential based on test scores and previous academic performance then considers whether the student could contribute significantly to the co-curricular life at the law school.

Boonshaft, a student in the day program, was considering other law schools when she was notified of the Leadership Scholar Award.

"I had not decided where to go and the award definitely weighed in my decision," she says. "I was also attracted to Maryland because of its highly regarded clinical program which offers students valuable experience working hands-on with those members of the Baltimore community who would otherwise have no legal representation."



Boonschaft, who plans to focus on public policy and legislation, finds law school challenging and stimulating.

“I have gained so much both academically and personally that I consider myself fortunate to be a part of such a rewarding community,” she says.

Strider Dickson had already decided to attend the University of North Carolina when he was selected as a Leadership Scholar.

“It did change my mind,” he says. “I had been considering Maryland, UNC and Tennessee, but the award made me reconsider.” Dickson also plans to concentrate on public-interest work. “I want to do more than make money. I want to do something for the public good.”

Dickson was a standout lacrosse player at Brown University and was named Academic All-Ivy in 1998. When he chose law school, he expected a challenge.

“I didn’t realize how challenging it would be—especially at exam time,” he explains. “But I learned more than I thought I could, and I believe that the experience has altered the way I look at almost everything.”

“I’m glad I came here for one reason that I didn’t expect—the people I’ve met, both teachers and students,” Dickson asserts. “I have met fascinating people and have learned a lot in and out of the classroom.”

Assistant Dean Forsyth notes that day-program students receive \$7,500 a year while evening students receive \$3,500. Every student admitted to the law school is considered for the merit-based award.

“We have a faculty financial aid awards committee that reviews the file of every student admitted to determine who might be a good candidate for the merit awards,” he explains. Although that is a considerable amount of work for the committee, Forsyth plans to continue making everyone eligible from the outset. He hopes to

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Mosley-Day explains that “the Air Force caps the amount of money it will pay for education.” Prior to enrolling at the School of Law, Mosley-Day earned a bachelor’s degree in political science from the Air Force Academy and a master’s degree in public policy from the University of Maryland, College Park. She also spent a year serving as a public affairs officer at Wright Patterson Air Force Base in Ohio.

After Mosley-Day receives the *juris doctor*, she will be assigned to the Judge Advocate General’s Office, where she expects to be “thrown into the fire.” She believes the law school’s clinical program will prepare her well for legal work with the Air Force; she cites the clinical program as a positive influence in her choice to attend the School of Law.

Forsyth recognizes the importance of competing with other schools but instead focuses on what Maryland does best. “We focus on people and programs,” he says. “Like a baseball team, we can’t do a lot about what the other team does, but instead we have to concentrate on how well we play. We build on our strengths and improve the areas that need it.”

Evening student Anirban Basu is building on his own strengths by attending law school. An economic consultant to private business in the public sector, Basu explains that “because there is such tremendous synergy between economics and the law, I believe that a rigorous legal background will help propel my consulting career.”

Basu had already made an investment in his own education before the law school made an investment in him. He has an undergraduate degree from Georgetown University’s School of Foreign Service; holds two master’s degrees—one in public policy from Harvard, the other in economics from the University of Maryland, College Park; and was working on a doctorate in economics at College Park before entering law school.

When Sarah Rees was notified of the Leadership Scholar Award, Maryland moved to the top of her list ahead of UNC Chapel Hill and Hastings in San Francisco, where she had also been accepted.

“It absolutely changed my mind,” says Rees, who finished her undergraduate program at South Carolina’s Clemson University in three years.

review files even earlier next year so as to contact scholarship recipients as quickly as possible.

“We’re competing with other law schools for first-rate students,” explains Gary Wimbish, director of admissions programs. “The prevailing issue with legal education is cost, so Maryland is attractive to those students who won’t be earning as much right out of school. They can incur less debt without compromising the integrity of their program.”

For students pursuing a public-interest career, Admissions staff point out that Maryland provides a financially attractive alternative to higher-priced programs.

For full-time student Serena Mosley-Day, cost was an issue when she was choosing a law school. An active-duty member of the U.S. Air Force,

"I'm younger than most people here, so I don't have a lot of real-world experience," she adds, "but I was active in two honor societies and did a lot of volunteer work through my sorority." Surprised by the number of resources and outside assistance offered to new students, Rees admits that the transition to law school has been less stressful than she imagined. "I expected the workloads and demands placed on my time to be extreme, but I learned that, like any project, it is all a matter of balancing my time and energy," she says.

Scholarship recipient and evening student Tony Edwards balances time between school and school. Edwards' job, as a social studies teacher at an alternative high school in Baltimore City, piqued his interest in juvenile justice and family law. "I was interested in gaining a perspective from the other side," Edwards explains, since his students are placed in the school by the juvenile justice system.

A graduate of Towson University with a double major in economics and history, Edwards notes that "teaching was always my ultimate goal." But now after earning his law degree, he wants to enter the public arena and work within the juvenile justice system.

First-year student Felicite Moorman chose Maryland for a number of reasons although receiving the Leadership Scholar Award was the deciding factor.

"I looked at a lot of different schools but the scholarship cinched it for me," she says. Moorman left home at 16 and worked her way through school. A love of learning propelled her through an undergraduate career with multiple majors including biology, philosophy and Roman studies. A demanding academic load coupled with work hours didn't leave Moorman much time for extracurricular activities.

"This has been incredible," she says. "The scholarship allows me to cut back on work hours so I can participate in activities that make me feel part of the law school community. Plus I get to study more."

Attracting students who have leadership potential in addition to stellar grades and test scores makes good sense to Forsyth. "It really goes back to the programs and the people," he says. "With careful development of the curriculum and thoughtful additions to the faculty, we're trying to draw students who will make the law school as good as it can be."

(Previous page, top to bottom) Anirban Basu, Sarah Rees, Shara Boonshaft. (At right, top to bottom) Serena Mosley-Day, Strider Dickson, and Felicite Moorman.

The 1999 Maryland Leadership Scholars

Tareneh Azani
Anirban Basu
Shara Boonshaft
Carrie Dannenfelser
Strider Dickson
Amy Douglas
Tony Edwards
Donna Engle

Felicite Moorman
Serena Mosley-Day
Danielle Noll
Sarah Rees
Toby Treem

1999

