

COMMENCEMENT 2009

KEYNOTE GREGORY GARRE, JD '91, OFFERS GRADUATES OPTIMISM AND INSPIRATION

“Whatever role you choose to play in this system, when the day’s work is done, you will have the satisfaction of knowing that you have not just done your job but—at least in some small way—helped to foster the rule of law and fortify our national fabric.”

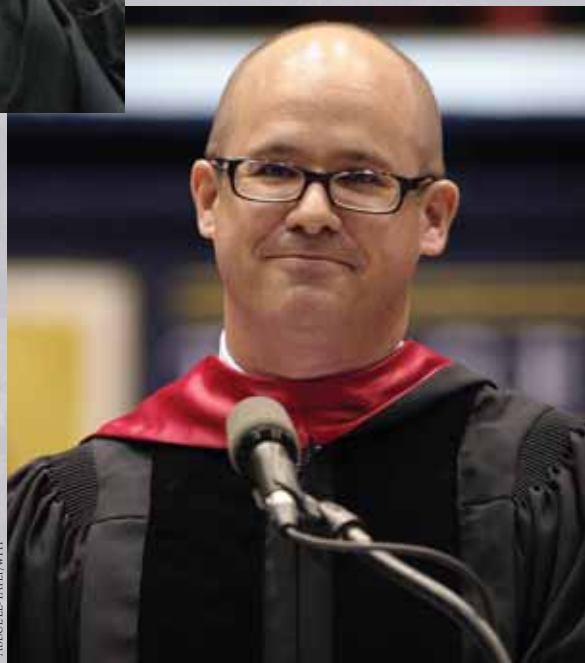
GREGORY GARRE, JD '91



This spring's graduating GW Law School class included 540 Juris Doctor graduates, 164 Master of Laws graduates, and two Doctor of Juridical Science graduates.



Keynote speaker Gregory Garre, JD '91, and Dean Frederick M. Lawrence



(Above) Professor Orin S. Kerr received this year's Distinguished Faculty Service Award, which is voted on each year by the graduating Juris Doctor class. (left) Angela Miller, JD '09, celebrates Commencement with her father, Hon. George W. Miller, LLM '68, of the U.S. Court of Federal Claims.

BY CARRIE MADREN | GW Law School graduates who earned their degrees in May reached new heights with their legal education. From this towering vantage point, they could look back on the efforts that allowed them to get to the top: studying into the wee hours, tackling major projects, and working toward a vision of success. At Commencement 2009, GW Law graduates also stood on the brink of their futures, facing challenges of a tough job market and possibilities of the unknown.

On May 17, it was with positive encouragement that keynote speaker Gregory Garre, JD '91, the 44th solicitor general of the

(Left) Keynote speaker Gregory Garre, JD '91, the 44th solicitor general of the United States, emphasized the importance of pursuing one's interests and living a well-rounded life.

United States, offered up nostalgia and a batch of wisdom for graduates as well as a dose of optimistic reality. This spring's graduating GW Law School class included 540 Juris Doctor graduates, 164 Master of Laws graduates, and two Doctor of Juridical Science graduates.

"Your careers will be shaped by opportunities and events that would never occur to you today and might even seem absurd if someone were able to tell you in advance," said Garre, who confided that when he graduated from GW Law, he never dreamed of the opportunity to argue before the U.S. Supreme Court or serve in the esteemed position of solicitor general.

Garre advised the more than 700 graduates to never sell themselves short.

“It’s not easy, and success always involves a great deal of hard work, but even in today’s difficult legal world, there is no reason you can’t go out and achieve your goals,” Garre said. A visiting and adjunct professor at GW Law, Garre served as solicitor general from October 2008 to January 2009.

The Law School Diploma Ceremony, held at the Charles E. Smith Center, followed a University-wide Commencement on the National Mall in which Rahm Emanuel, White House chief of staff, delivered the keynote address to 25,000 graduates and their guests and received an honorary doctor of public service degree.

As is tradition at GW Law’s Diploma Ceremony later that day, faculty, staff, and students earned accolades for impressive work.

GW Law’s 2009 JD class voted Professor of Law Orin Kerr the recipient of the Distinguished Faculty Service Award. Sheila Driscoll, director of judicial clerkships, received the Distinguished Staff Service Award. Distinguished Adjunct

Faculty Service Awards were given to Michael St. Patrick Baxter, Jane Moretz Edmisten, and Thomas Mounteer.

Three outstanding students were also honored. Dean Frederick M. Lawrence presented the John Bell Lerner Award to Christopher Meeks for the highest cumulative average in his class. Kevin Parton received the Anne Wells Branscomb Award for the highest cumulative average in the part-time evening division. The graduating class voted Jaclyn Lasaracina the recipient of the Michael Dillon Cooley Memorial Award, which is presented to a member of the graduating Juris Doctor class who shared most generously of his or her time, compassion, and vitality to aid the intellectual and spiritual growth of fellow students.

“While most of the Class of 2009 will join other members of the American bar practicing throughout the United States, more than 100 members of the class will return to their homes in one of the 42 countries represented in our student body,” Lawrence said. The 700 graduates now join the ranks of GW Law School’s lifelong and worldwide alumni community.

As the diploma ceremony drew to a close and graduates shifted in seats ready to celebrate the day, Garre offered up one last mountaintop view, looking to the future: “Whatever role you choose to play in this system, when the day’s work is done, you will have the satisfaction of knowing that you have not just done your job but—at least in some small way—helped to foster the rule of law and fortify our national fabric.” **GW**



Dean Frederick M. Lawrence presented Christopher Meeks with the John Bell Lerner Award, which is given to the student with the highest cumulative grade average of the Juris Doctor degree program.



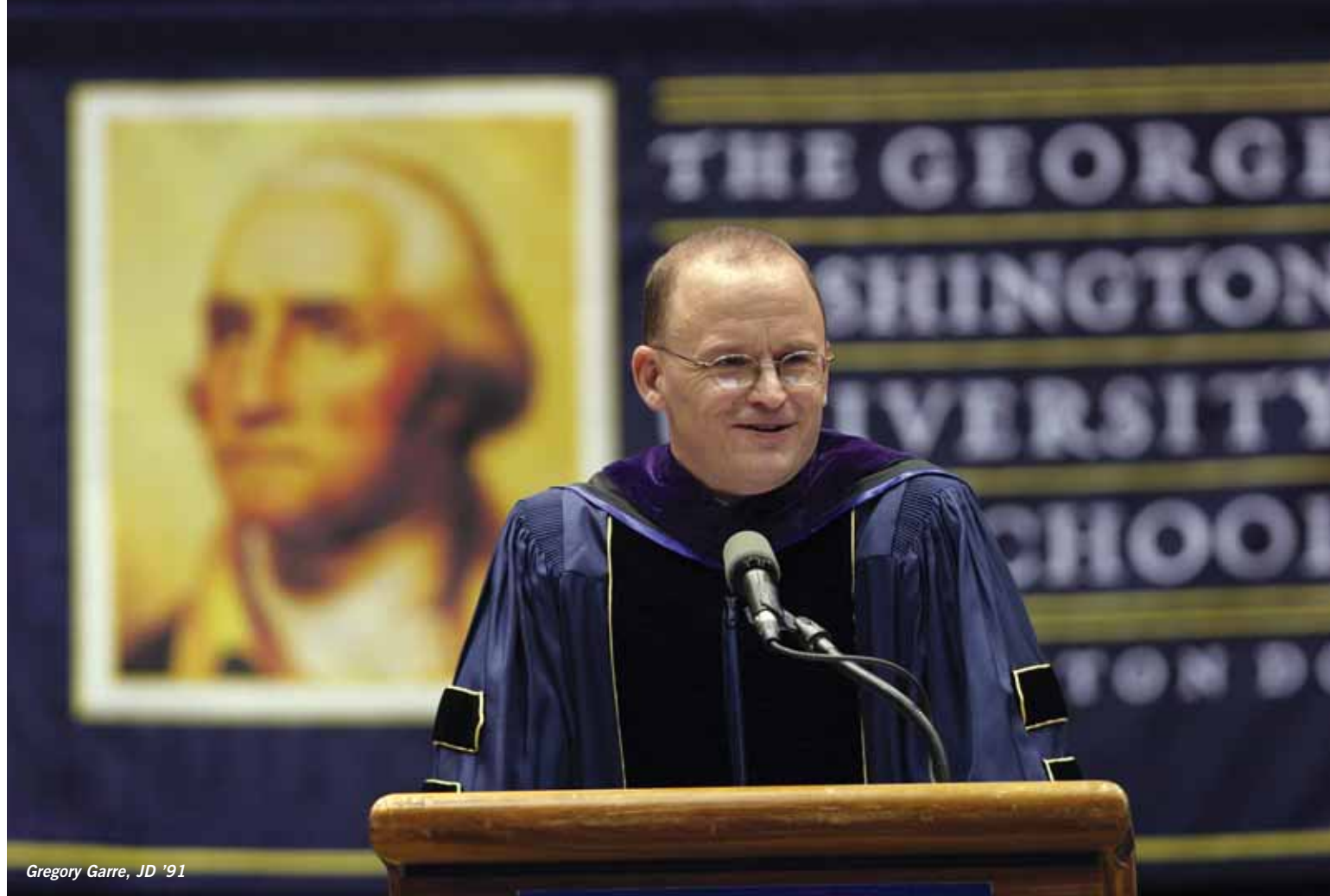
Kevin Barton, pictured here with Dean Frederick M. Lawrence, won the Anne Wells Branscomb Award for the highest cumulative grade average in the evening division.



This year’s graduating class voted Jaclyn Lasaracina, pictured here with her family, the recipient of the Michael Dillon Cooley Memorial Award.



New members were inducted into the Stockton Guard, which comprises GW Law School alumni who graduated 40 or more years ago.



Gregory Garre, JD '91

A Teacher and a Mentor

Gregory Garre, JD '91, says that one of the remarkable things about coming back to teach at his law school alma mater is working alongside professors who once taught him.

The former law student who would one day become solicitor general remembers professor Joshua Schwartz, in particular.

"He was someone who had worked in the solicitor general's office and would talk about the cases he worked on," says Garre, who was a visiting professor at GW Law this spring and has taught at the Law School on an adjunct basis since 1995. "It seemed to me that was as cool a job as a lawyer could have."

Garre scored that cool job 17 years later, when he was confirmed as the 44th solicitor general of the United States, serving from October 2008 through January 2009.

"The greatest privilege a lawyer can have is to represent the United States before the Supreme Court—it's a thrilling experience," Garre says.

During his time as solicitor general, Garre argued the case *FCC v. Fox*, dealing with the Federal Communications Commission's broadcast rules on the use of indecent four letter words. In another case, he defended the Navy's use of sonar in training exercises for submarines and naval strike forces. Environmental groups claimed that the sonar injured marine mammals, but the court agreed with the government's position that the training exercises should go forward.

Before becoming solicitor general, he served as principal deputy solicitor general from 2005 to 2008 and assistant to the solicitor

general from 2000 to 2004. Garre has argued 27 cases before the U.S. Supreme Court as well as high-profile cases before federal courts of appeals. He was a partner in the law firm of Hogan & Hartson in Washington, where he headed the firm's Supreme Court and appellate practice section. He also clerked for U.S. Supreme Court Chief Justice William Rehnquist and, prior to that, for Hon. Anthony J. Scirica, the chief judge of the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Third Circuit.

During his time teaching at GW Law School, Garre taught Supreme Court practice and constitutional law. This past semester, spring 2009, was his last at the Law School. He plans to enter into private practice in the next few months, although he says he still hopes to be involved with GW Law's program.

Throughout the last decade, Garre has taught students more than legal know-how—he's instilled qualities of good lawyering.

"Certainly as a litigator, it's important to listen to judges' questions," Garre says. "Civility is also important—the practice of law is working with other lawyers, so it's important on personal and professional levels that lawyers be civil in dealing with one another."

Also important is for lawyers to remember why they pursued legal careers in the first place. At the Law School's Diploma Ceremony in May, Garre urged graduates to retain a sense of awe for their courtroom work, looking at the big picture.

"Any time you're a lawyer litigating cases, courts are pronouncing how the law is applied," Garre says. "As a lawyer, you're playing a small part in that process as courts are issuing decisions advising Americans and other lawyers what the law is."

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