On May 19, veteran ESPN sportscaster Bob Ley (photo, top left) told 1,300 members of the Class of 2008 to “grab that moment” as they discover the wonders of life to come. The graduates, surrounded by their families and friends, heeded his message and clearly enjoyed every moment of their special day.

Ley, who received an honorary Doctor of Humane Letters from the University, delivered the main Commencement address during the ceremony on Gengras lawn. Honorary degrees were also presented to Valerie Lewis, retired Connecticut commissioner of higher education, and Marylouise Fennell M’72, C’73, an internationally recognized management consultant in higher education. The Distinguished Alumnus Award was presented to Peter Schauer, MD, ’71, division chief of medical oncology at Hartford Hospital since 1990.

Jeffrey DesRosier received the John G. Lee Medal, which is awarded to a graduating senior who has excelled academically and is engaged in extensive community service. Erin Johnson was presented with the John G. Martin Scholarship to spend the next two years studying at Oxford University; and Sandy Hughes received the Belle K. Ribicoff Prize, awarded to a graduating senior who has achieved academic excellence, taken on leadership roles, and been active in extracurricular activities.

Faculty award recipients were Charles R. Canedy III, associate professor of marketing in the Barney School of Business; Chittaranjan Sahay, professor of mechanical engineering in the College of Engineering, Technology, and Architecture; John A. (Jay) Stewart, associate professor of sociology in the College of Arts and Sciences; and Harald Sandström, associate professor of politics and government in the College of Arts and Sciences.

Fifteen members of the Class of ’58—dubbed “Golden Hawks”—attended the ceremony as honored guests.
Among the 68 members of the first graduating class of the University High School of Science and Engineering were 16 students who are attending the University this year.

An exuberant, celebratory crowd greeted 68 high school students as they entered Lincoln Theater on June 13. The students were the first graduating class, known as the “Legacy Class,” of the University High School of Science and Engineering (UHSSE), a public magnet school housed on the University’s Asylum Avenue campus.

The Legacy Class of 2008 had a graduation rate of nearly 100 percent, and nearly all of the 68 graduates will continue their education at a college or university. Both these figures are significantly above the average for Hartford public schools.

Bernard A. Harris Jr., MD, who in 1995 became the first African American astronaut to walk in space, delivered the keynote address. Harris, who describes himself as a “dreamer who believes nothing is impossible,” is currently president of The Harris Foundation, Inc., a nonprofit organization he founded in 1998 to develop math and science education programs for America’s youth. He encouraged the graduates to follow their dreams.

“There is no greater high in this world than to get to the dream you have in your heart,” Harris said. “Now you have the tools to make your dreams come true. Education is your launching pad.”

The University presented Harris with an honorary Doctor of Science. University of Hartford President Walter Harrison told the graduates, “You have succeeded far beyond our wildest dreams.”

Established in 2004 as a partnership between the University of Hartford and Hartford Public Schools, University High School is based on the Early College Initiative model. Students can earn college credits while they attend high school. As University High School is a Hartford magnet school, 70 percent of its students come from the city of Hartford and 30 percent come from cities and towns throughout central Connecticut.

Construction on a new, $32 million, 55,000 square-foot, three-story building for UHSSE began on the University of Hartford campus in September 2007 and is expected to be completed in early 2009.