

Decoding the colors of commencement

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The practice of wearing caps and gowns to signify a graduate's educational passage from one level to the next extends back to medieval universities. Since then, generations of students have continued the tradition and in modern times found ways of adding unique touches to the tradition. Use this guide, designed by Tulane University graphic designer Kim Rainey, to help identify the regalia you'll see graduates donning in the Mercedes-Benz Superdome during the 2017 Unified Commencement Ceremony.

The [commencement ceremony](#) on Saturday, May 20, will be streamed live online. Follow [Commencement 2017](#) on social media at [#tulane17](#).

Decoding Commencement



The Tassel

The color system used to signify different academic disciplines became standardized in the United States in the late 19th century. However, the color assignments were inspired by ancient European traditions. For example, a green tassel represents Medicine, as the color is meant to symbolize the long-ago use of medicinal herbs.

Art, Letters and Humanities — White	Medicine — Green
Business — Gold	Public Health — Salmon Pink
Engineering — Orange	Science — Yellow
Fine Arts/Architecture — Brown	Social Science — Citron
Law — Purple	



The Gown

The robes worn by Tulane graduates and members of the Board of Tulane were redesigned in 2008 to include unique details identifying levels of academic degrees earned by students.

A bachelor's degree candidate wears a black gown with a green Tulane University shield printed on the yoke.

A master's degree candidate wears a black gown with tabs on the front that have green Tulane University shields embroidered on them.

A PhD candidate wears a hunter green robe with black velvet trim and Tulane University shields on the front.

The Academic Mace

Reminiscent of a royal scepter, a ceremonial mace was first used in 1789 at the University of Vienna. Initially designed for the 1899 Tulane University Commencement, the mace is carried in the opening procession and mounted onstage. Crafted from silver and African Blackwood, the stem is topped by the "Pelican in Her Piety" symbol from the university's seal.



The Mortarboard

Bachelor's degree candidates wear black caps, known as mortarboards, to which a long tassel is fastened. The tassel is worn on the right side before the ceremony and is switched over to the left side once the graduate walks across the commencement stage.



