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 don in Yulman Stadium during the 2023 Unified Commencement Ceremony.
Decoding Commencement

The Tassel

The tassel, which is often orange or yellow, represents the student's academic achievements. The tassel is worn on the graduation cap and is used as a symbol of graduation. It is typically worn on the right side for men and on the left side for women. After the ceremony, the tassel is turned to the other side to signify the completion of the graduation process.

The Gown

The gown is a black academic robe with a gold square that signifies the student's degree. The gown is worn over the academic regalia and is typically ordered online through the university's bookstore. The gown is an important symbol of academic achievement and is worn by all graduates during the ceremony.

The Academic Mace

The academic mace is a ceremonial baton that is carried by the university president during the commencement ceremony. It is usually made of wood or metal and is decorated with the university's coat of arms. The mace is carried in the procession and is used to symbolize the university's authority and to represent the importance of the academic community.

The Mortarboard

The mortarboard is a cap worn by students during the commencement ceremony. It is typically made of felt and is decorated with the university's logo or symbols. The mortarboard is worn on the head with the tassel on the front and is a symbol of the student's academic achievement. It is often worn during the graduation ceremony and is removed once the graduate has completed their degree.