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 Tassel is a color-coded tassel that is worn on the tassel of the academic regalia worn by students. The color of the tassel represents the student's degree, major, or minor.

The Gown

The Gown is the black academic gown worn by students during commencement ceremonies. It is made of silk and cotton and is worn over the academic regalia. The gown is decorated with the university seal and the student's academic degree.

The Academic Mace

The Academic Mace is a ceremonial staff used to symbolize the knowledge and wisdom of the academic community. It is made of wood and is typically decorated with symbols representing the university, such as the university seal.

The Mortarboard

The Mortarboard is a cap worn by students during commencement ceremonies. It is made of felt and bears the student's academic degree and the university seal. The mortarboard is worn on the head, with the tassel hanging down in front of the graduate.