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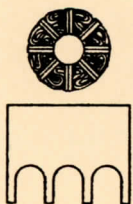
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**The Traditions
of
Commencement**



**pan
american
university**

Academic Regalia

Dignity and formality mark the traditional ceremony known as commencement in American colleges and universities. This ceremony is a high point in the life of each person qualifying for a degree, and is always regarded as a solemn occasion.

Traditions associated with commencement include the academic pageantry of wearing caps and gowns in a dignified procession of faculty and graduates. These caps and gowns are called "academic regalia", and they have been worn by scholars since medieval times.

During the 11th and 12th centuries, monks, students and other professionals wore long robes as a defense against cold, drafty rooms and corridors. Over the years, some of the gowns became specialized costumes for scholars. In the tradition of medieval heraldry, the colors and shape of the silk linings inside the robes and their hoods identified the scholars' degrees, their fields of study and their Alma Maters.

As an example, Dr. Miguel A. Nevarez, the president of Pan American University, wears a black gown with dark blue velvet facings down the front, three dark blue velvet stripes on each sleeve, and a hood with a purple and pale blue silk lining to represent New York University, which awarded his doctor of philosophy degree. The hood is trimmed with a wide band of dark blue velvet, indicating that his field of learning is philosophy.

Uniform Code

In 1895, American institutions of higher learning adopted a uniform code for academic costume. The gown for the holder of a bachelor's degree is black and has simple, straight lines and pointed sleeves. The master's gown is similar, with closed sleeves which have long, straight backs and semi-circular cut-outs in the front. The doctor's gown is usually black and has a velvet facing around the neck and down each side of the front. Each sleeve has three horizontal velvet bars.

The color of the velvet edging on the hood indicates the field of learning (apricot for nursing, light blue for education, white for humanities, etc.) for which the degree was awarded. The colors used in the lining of the hood indicate the institution which awarded the degree (University of Texas, Rice University, New York University, etc.). The level of the degree (Bachelors, Masters, Doctors) is indicated by the size, length, and shape of the hood and the width of the velvet trimming. Some hood linings have single colors, and others are marked with bars or chevrons in different colors. These symbolic markings have been used for more than a thousand years.

The Traditional Cap

The cap most frequently worn with academic regalia is called a "mortar board". This distinctive headgear derives its name from the stiff, square board which it resembles. A tassel is attached to the center of the mortar board.

Some universities have chosen to robe their graduates in a color other than black and in a different style of cap.

Recessional March

Many universities have distinctive traditions associated with their own graduation ceremonies. Pan American University has established the tradition of a recessional march across campus to the ballroom for a reception in honor of the new graduates and their families. This procession includes all faculty and newly graduated students. All others remain seated until the last graduate leaves the hall. Families and guests may then follow the procession across campus or join the graduates at the reception.

Seedling Palms

Another tradition, initiated in 1982, is the presentation of a seedling palm to each graduate. The presentation of these palms is sponsored by the PAU Alumni Association as a symbol of the graduates' new status and of their future growth. These palms will, in the years to come, take root in many soils, standing tall and proud, constant reminders of the shared achievements of Pan American University graduates and their Alma Mater.

Colors for the Various Fields of Learning

Maize	agriculture
White	arts, letters and humanities
Drab	business administration
Lilac	dentistry
Copper	economics
Light blue	education
Orange	engineering
Brown	fine arts, including architecture
Russet	forestry
Maroon	home economics
Crimson	journalism
Purple	law
Lemon	Library science
Green	medicine
Pink	music
Apricot	nursing
Silver gray	oratory (speech)
Olive green	pharmacy
Dark blue	philosophy
Sage green	physical education
Peacock blue	public administration
Salmon pink	public health
Gold-yellow	science
Citron	social science
Scarlet	theology or divinity
Gray	veterinary science