Your Field Guide to Academic Regalia

To make sure you don’t get caught out of the know at President Rozanski’s inauguration festivities, we’ve put together this handy guide to make sure you know who and what you’re looking at.

Featuring Dean Joseph Nadeau, Dr. Mark Sandberg, Dr. Phyllis Frakt and Dr. Drew Procaccino
Compiled by Laura Sass, Allen Huang and Vincent Civitillo

Key

1. Usually the flat mortarboard, but the puffy biretta or “Dutch” cap (with 4, 6 or 8 sides) has caught on with our fashionable models. It is guessed that it was designed as a square either to be like scholars and their books or adopted from the shape of an English campus. Scholars also have a choice of a tam or beret.

2. Tassel worn on left after graduation, (on right before the big moment). Usually black for undergrads. Masters have the option of wearing discipline color, and doctors usually wear gold.

3. Three stripes represent doctoral degree.

4. Gown and hood represent university and discipline of highest degree earned. Dr. Mark Sandberg, Management and Human Resources, is wearing a red and white hood from Cornell with a red gown. Dr. Drew Procaccino, Computer Information Systems, is wearing a blue and gold hood from Drexel. Vice President Phyllis Frakt, provost, is wearing a red gown from Rutgers; the purple velvet on her hood represents law/political science. Dean Joseph Nadeau of the College of Liberal Arts, Education and Sciences is wearing a crimson and gray hood from Washington State. The yellow (or gold) trim on his gown represents science.

5. The hood has velvet edging for the discipline. It is often blue, meaning any doctor of philosophy. Others include white for arts and letters, light blue for education and the ever-popular “drab” for business administration.

6. Satin lining of hood has university colors.

7. Black gown always in fashion, but some universities approve alternate colors, like red for Rutgers.

8. Puffy sleeves represent a doctor's gown.

History

In the 11th and 12th centuries, an interest in learning was revived. Medieval universities appeared in Paris and Bologna early in the 12th century, and the English universities of Oxford and Cambridge soon followed. These were called universitates, which meant guilds or associations.

This, at first, did not refer only to education, but merely any organization of citizens. The term bachelor was originally used to describe a man who was the assistant of a small land owner. It distinguished the apprentice from the master. The term doctor was probably used as a title for those possessing the highest degree of learning after the establishment of the first universities. Gradually it changed into the modern definition. The idea of wearing gowns at graduation originated in Oxford in the late 19th century; the first American universities to do so were Yale, Harvard and the University of Pennsylvania. Only in the last century have graduating high school students started wearing regalia.

During the 12th century, everyone wore gowns, whether man or woman, commoner or lord. By the end of the 17th century only legal and official personages among men wore gowns. Gowns are usually black or the school’s color; plain is an undergraduate or master; a doctor has three stripes, called chevrons, on the sleeves. Masters have a long pointed sleeve while the bachelor has a rounded sleeve.

The hood appeared as an article of clothing in the 13th century. It was a sort of pointed bag with an oval opening for the face. The point, often long, hung down behind. If it was short it stuck up. By the 16th century the hood was only worn by legal, official, clerical and academic personages. The inner hood color is the university’s color. Rider’s are maroon and white, Penn’s red and blue, Rutgers’ red. The outer velvet on the hood indicates discipline. Philosophy is blue, purple is law, sage green is physical education, medicine is dark green, music is pink, psychology is white and all of the sciences are gold. At Rider there are three for undergraduates: white for arts, drab (light brown) for business and light blue for education.