

WHAT'S WITH ALL THOSE GRADUATION SYMBOLS AND RITUALS?

TTU -- With Tennessee Tech University's largest graduating class ever getting set to earn degrees May 3, friends and family members could use some tips on spotting students they know in the commencement ceremonies.

Perhaps the best way to spot a friend or relative among the graduating class is to know what degree he or she will be earning.

That's because tassel colors for TTU mortarboards represent the specific degree being presented. Degrees awarded and their corresponding tassel colors are:

- * White -- Bachelor or master of arts
- * Golden yellow -- Bachelor or master of science, bachelor of science in interdisciplinary studies or bachelor of science in world cultures and business
- * Drab -- Bachelor of science in business administration or master of business administration or bachelor of science in world cultures and business
- * Light blue -- Bachelor of Science in education or specialist in education
- * Brown -- Bachelor of fine arts
- * Pink -- Bachelor of music
- * Maize -- Bachelor of science in agriculture
- * Orange -- Bachelor of science in engineering
- * Maroon -- Bachelor of science in human ecology
- * Apricot -- Bachelor of science in nursing
- * Metallic Gold -- Doctor of philosophy.

While the academic regalia of mortarboards and gowns now serve largely as symbols of education, they once had very practical applications for scholars.

The regalia dates back to the Middle Ages, when students and teachers used the gowns and hoods to keep warm during their studies in damp and drafty halls of learning.

The long sleeves of the scholars' gowns also provided storage areas for writing instruments and paper.

The mortarboard -- the square, flat cap worn by graduates -- originally served as a writing surface for the wearer.

Although modern conveniences such as backpacks and personal computers may have replaced those items in purpose, a graduate's mortarboard and gown still symbolize the hard work spent gaining knowledge in his or her area of learning.

Friday, May 02, 2008: Herald-Citizen, Cookeville, Putnam Co., TN

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