The University of Texas at Dallas

Doctoral Hooding Ceremony

August 7, 2020
MESSAGE TO THE GRADUATES

Congratulations on the successful completion of your studies at The University of Texas at Dallas! We’re proud of you!

When you enrolled at UT Dallas, you undoubtedly expected to take the traditional walk across the stage in your graduation regalia while your family and friends cheered from the stands.

Unfortunately, the global health crisis has caused significant disruption to life as we know it. We are so very disappointed that your final months at UT Dallas didn’t include the usual fanfare that surrounds commencement.

Please know that our pride in your accomplishments is undiminished, and we will find a way to commemorate this important milestone in person on our beautiful campus.

While the pandemic has taken much from our world, this fact remains unchanged: We wish for each of you a fulfilling and rewarding future. You are our legacy. The very reputation of UT Dallas will be defined by you, as it has been by the accomplished graduates who have come before you.

Thank you for choosing UT Dallas for your studies, thank you for all that you contributed to our university during your studies, and, once again...

Congratulations, Class of 2020!

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COMMENCEMENT SYMBOLS

Academic symbols date to the Middle Ages and include the mace, chain of office, academic regalia, and gonfalons.

THE CEREMONIAL MACE

The mace is a ceremonial staff of authority that administrators and faculty at universities worldwide carry at the head of academic processions. Traditionally made of wood and clad with metal, the mace was originally a weapon of war used to knock an enemy from his horse or crush his armor. The mace evolved into a symbol of peaceful leadership and kings encrusted them with jewels and precious metals.

The UT Dallas mace was handcrafted by local woodworkers from part of the 600-year-old Treaty Oak Tree in Austin, which is said to have shaded Stephen F. Austin as he signed the first boundary agreement between American Indians and settlers in 1824. The tree was also said to be the last of a grove of live oaks where Native Americans once held feasts and religious ceremonies.

The four-foot, ten-pound mace includes sterling silver university seals surrounding a wafer embedded with Texas Instruments microchips representing the role of the company in the founding of the University. A steel band in the headpiece and the metal foot of the staff are fashioned from scientific instruments designed by the UT Dallas Space Sciences Institute and flown aboard the Space Shuttle Endeavor in September 1995. The mace stands in the president's office when not in use.

CHAIN OF OFFICE

The UT Dallas chain of office is the traditional symbol used to signify the responsibilities and authority of the University president. The links of the chain are engraved with the names of the presidents of the University above a large medallion in the form of the University seal.

The seal of The University of Texas at Dallas has as its central feature a shield that is divided into two fields, the upper and the lower. In the lower field are the historic wreath – the right half of which is an olive branch, the left half a live oak branch – and the star of the Great Seal of the State of Texas. In the upper field is an open book, a fitting symbol for an institution of learning.

The shield rests in a circle and contains the motto “Disciplina Praesidium Civitatis.” The motto is the late Dr. Edwin W. Fay's terse Latin rendering of the famous quotation from Mirabeau B. Lamar: “Cultivated mind is the guardian genius of democracy.” Around the disk is a larger one, bearing the words “The University of Texas at Dallas.”
ACADEMIC REGALIA

Students in the medieval universities of Paris, Bologna, Oxford, and Cambridge organized into guilds, and gradually their costumes of flowing robes became distinctive for Bachelors (apprentices) of Arts, Masters (teachers) and Doctors (teachers who had completed postgraduate studies).

The academic hood worn by today’s Masters and Doctoral students derives from the medieval cloak worn over the gown. The color on the outside trim of the hood indicates the degree earned; the colors on the hood lining area those of the university granting the degree.

The academic cap was a later development, first conferred as a symbol of the Master’s degree. Some caps were stiff, some soft; some were square, some found with a tuft. The tassel of today is an elaboration of the tuft. Round caps are still used by some institutions. The square mortar board style originated at Oxford.

In the United States, the Intercollegiate Code has taken the Oxford costume and standardized academic regalia. The Master’s gown has long, pointed sleeves; the Doctoral gown has closed sleeves with three bars of velvet on each and velvet facing.

Six colors of tassels are worn by UT Dallas graduates. The white tassel is worn by those receiving the Bachelor of Arts and Master of Arts; the golden tassel is worn by those receiving the Bachelor of Science and Master of Science; the drab tassel is worn by those receiving the Master of Business Administration; the teal tassel is worn by those receiving the Master of Public Affairs; the brown tassel is worn by those receiving the Master of Fine Arts; and the gold tassel is reserved for Doctors and Presidents.

GONFALONS

The gonfalons – or college banners – add a wonderful element of color and pageantry to The University of Texas at Dallas commencement and convocation ceremonies. The gonfalon is a long banner that is suspended from a crossbar. The name derives from medieval Italy, where “gonfalone” was the name given to a community meeting in Florence. Each neighborhood had its own flag and coat of arms and the word gonfalon eventually came to be associated with the flag.

All gonfalons have in common several elements that symbolize the unified mission of the University. Among these common elements are the school colors, green and orange. The color orange represents The University of Texas System and is derived from the burnt orange UT Austin, the first UT school. In the world of academia, the orange color symbolizes engineering. UT Dallas’ green color stems from the green olive and oak branches that are represented in the UT Dallas seal. Olive branches symbolize peace and oak branches symbolize strength and endurance.