



### Commencement History

The Commencement Ceremony is an ancient one, rich in tradition. The first commencement ceremonies were held by European universities in the Middle Ages. These ceremonies signified that the graduates were recognized by their professions and were ready to begin, or commence teaching. Today, the ceremony formally recognizes academic achievement and officially confers on successful candidates the appropriate degree or certificate earned by satisfactorily completing a required course of study.

### The Academic Gown

The academic costume worn in American college commencement exercises today goes back to the commencement ceremonies of the Middle Ages. The oldest universities of northern Europe grew out of church schools. Both faculty and students were regarded as a part of the clergy. Hence, they wore clerical garb borrowed from the monastic dress of their day, not merely on special occasions, but as their regular costume. The gown is derived from the medieval roba, borrowed from the habit of the Benedictine monks.

In the Middle Ages undergraduates, bachelors and masters could be distinguished by the simplicity or the elaborateness of their gowns. This survives today in the cut of bachelor, master and doctoral gowns and in the ornamentation found on doctoral gowns. The wide velvet borders extending down the front of the doctoral gown, the velvet bars on the sleeves and the borders of most hoods are colored according to the scholarly field of the wearer. For example, for nursing the color is peach, for business the color is brown and for engineering the color is blue.

Ivy Tech Community College Associate Degree and Technical Certificate candidates wear traditional black academic gowns. Wearing a corsage or jewelry on an academic gown is considered inappropriate. Family or friends sometimes present a female graduate with a bouquet of flowers after the diploma has been received. This is very appropriate.

### The Hood

The hood (the medieval capitium) was originally a covering worn over the head in bad weather, and otherwise dropped onto the shoulders like the monk's cowl. At first the hood was worn by faculty and students alike. In the early sixteenth century, it was restricted to graduates. Thus the hood came to be the mark of a degree holder. Today each college has its distinctively colored hood lining by which its graduates may be recognized in academic processions.



### The Mortarboard and Tassel

The head covering evolved from the skullcap worn by medieval clergy in cold weather to protect their tonsured (shaven) heads. In the universities, this skullcap acquired a point on top, which evolved into a tassel. The bonnet with tassel is still worn by degree-holders of the European universities.

In this country, the bonnet has been largely replaced by the cap with mortarboard, which still retains the tassel. The cap is worn so that the mortarboard is level. The tassel is allowed to hang naturally. Candidates for a degree or certificate wear the tassel over the right temple; once the diploma is conferred, the tassel is moved to the left temple.

As is traditional at Ivy Tech Community College, the color of the tassel differentiates the degree or certificate conferred. Associate Degree candidates wear a green and white tassel while Technical Certificate candidates wear white.

### Honors

Honors are determined by grade point average (GPA) at the end of the fall semester. Those with a cumulative GPA of 4.0 graduate Summa Cum Laude (Highest Honors). Those with a cumulative GPA of 3.75 to 3.99 graduate Magna Cum Laude (High Honors) and those with a GPA of 3.5 to 3.74 graduate Cum Laude (with Honors).

Honors graduates of the College wear the gold honors cord draped around the neck. Phi Theta Kappa Honor Society members may wear the society's gold stole.

### Music

For generations, "Pomp and Circumstance" has been played for the commencement procession. The audience stands during the procession, remains standing for the National Anthem and stands again for the recession.

### Conduct of Graduates and Audience

A commencement ceremony is a solemn occasion. Graduates and audience members are expected to conduct themselves in a manner appropriate to the solemnity and dignity of the occasion. Cheers and applause for individual graduates should be held until all graduates have crossed the stage.

