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Kenny Suit
Milligan College, ksuit@milligan.edu

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Reaping the Whirlwind: American Degree and Subject Colours (1962–Present)

By Kenneth L. Suit, Jr

For they sow the wind,
and they shall reap the whirlwind.
The standing grain has no heads;
it shall yield no flour;
if it were to yield,
strangers would devour it.
Hosea 8.7 (ESV)

It was supposed to be so very simple. A committee of representatives from several East Coast universities called the Intercollegiate Commission on Academic Costume standardized the American system of academic costume in 1895. The keystone of the cap and gown standards the Commissioners designed was the hood. In its shape, edging, and colours the American academic hood was to be

a plain badge of the degree, be it Bachelor, Master or Doctor; of the department of learning, be it Arts, Philosophy Law, Theology or other; and of the institution granting the degree or with which the holder was then connected.¹

This basic semiotic system of hood design became the most important part of the committee's Intercollegiate Code of Academic Costume, which included eight colours 'distinctive of the Faculty to which the degree pertains' that were used to encompass all of the degrees conferred at the universities that had sent representatives to serve on the committee.

These eight degree colours were conceived both specifically and broadly, so for instance the brown of Fine Arts would not only indicate the Bachelor and Master of Fine Arts degrees but also the Bachelor of Painting, Bachelor and Master of Architecture, and Bachelor and Master of Design degrees, among other degrees in the fine and applied arts. Likewise, the golden yellow of Science would indicate the Bachelor, Master, and Doctor of Science degrees but also the Doctor of Chemistry degree as well as the Bachelor and Master of Engineering degrees.

But almost immediately some universities began to request special colours to represent subsets of these broadly defined degree colour categories. Bachelor, Master, and Doctor of Engineering degrees, for instance, were later assigned orange; Bachelor, Master, and Doctor of Education degrees were separated from the Liberal Arts white and given light

¹ Gardner Cotrell Leonard, *The Cap and Gown in America, to which is Added an Illustrated Sketch of the Intercollegiate System of Academic Costume* (Albany: Cotrell & Leonard, 1896), p. 11.









Arts and Letters		White
Fine Arts		Brown
Law		Purple
Medicine		Green
Music		Pink
Philosophy		Dark Blue
Science		Gold Yellow
Theology		Scarlet

Fig. 1. The original degree colours authorized by the 1895 Intercollegiate Code of Academic Costume.

blue; and Doctor of Dentistry and Doctor of Pharmacy degrees were respectively granted lilac and olive so as to be distinct from the green of the Doctor of Medicine degree.

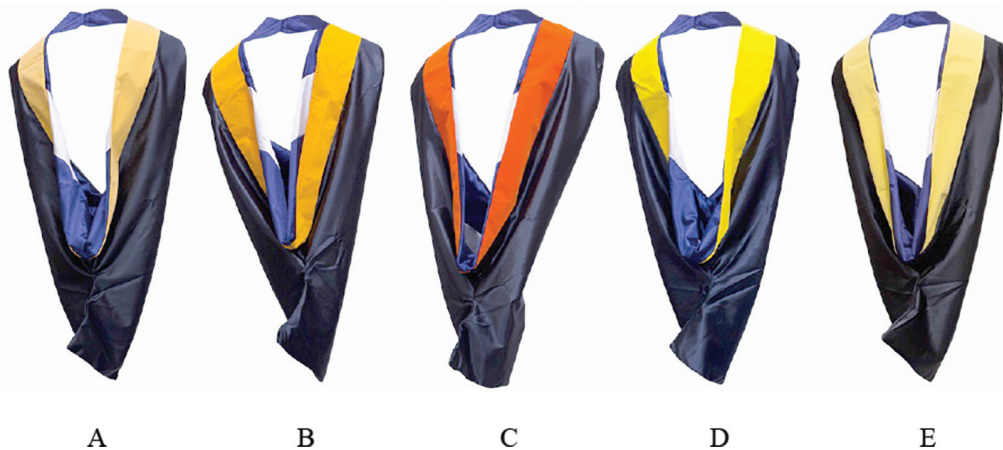
The 1895 committee had left the authorization of new degree colours like these to the Intercollegiate Bureau of Academic Costume, a clearing-house for information about academic costume that was affiliated with the largest academic costume manufacturing company in the US, Cotrell & Leonard.² In 1903 the Regents of the University of the State of New York³ appointed the IBAC to maintain a collection of records and documents about academic costume and to assign new colours to degrees authorized by that state. The Intercollegiate Bureau engaged in these tasks with great vigour, so by 1918 there were a total of twenty-two official degree colours the Bureau had authorized.⁴

The Intercollegiate Bureau of Academic Costume felt these new colours were justified because they represented graduate degrees being conferred by new ‘faculties’ (that is, schools or colleges within a university, rather than departments within a school or college)—and importantly, these degrees had titles that included the name of that faculty (Master of Public Health, Master of Education, Doctor of Pharmacy, etc.). Most of these new degrees were not traditional liberal arts or research degrees like the standard Master of Arts, Master of Science, or Doctor of Philosophy degrees, but were instead vocational graduate degrees with degree titles that identified the profession. The Intercollegiate Bureau could not have foreseen the problems this steady expansion in the number of professional programmes would bring to the Code, but even in 1911 critics were arguing that the ‘multiplication of degrees has been carried to an extreme in this country accompanying in

² The Cotrell & Leonard company was said to be the ‘depository’ for the Intercollegiate Bureau of Academic Costume.

³ The Regents of the University of the State of New York are the state-accrediting organization for all educational institutions in New York, including public and private primary and secondary schools as well as public and private colleges and universities.

⁴ For a more detailed history of early American degree colours, see Kenneth L. Suit, Jr, ‘The Iridescent Web: American Degree Colours (1895–1935)’, *TBS*, 15 (2015), pp. 41–74, at <newprairiepress.org/burgonsociety> <https://doi.org/10.4148/2475-7799.1133>.



Nevada Wolf Shop: www.nevadawolfshop.com

Fig. 2. Time for a pop quiz. These hoods from the University of Nevada, Reno, are for Master's degrees in Agriculture (maize), Engineering (orange), Nursing (apricot), Science (golden yellow), and Social Work (citron). Which one is which?⁵

extent the opportunities for specialization in the different studies. [...] The increase in the number of degrees is of recent growth, dating perhaps from the middle of the last century'.⁶

Possibly as an expression of resistance to the proliferation of these 'boutique' degree titles, the Intercollegiate Bureau significantly slowed the pace of new degree colour authorizations after World War I, but even so, by the late 1950s the situation had got out of hand. By that point the IBAC was receiving an excessive number of requests for new degree colours and felt that the large number of official colours was already making the precise identification of the shades of existing colours difficult. Among the twenty-seven degree colours the Intercollegiate Bureau had authorized by 1958 were a half dozen or more that were difficult to distinguish from each other, and some of the degree colour categories the IBAC had created were rather obscure. The crimson of Humanics was easily confused with the scarlet of Theology, for example, but one would be lucky to find a college or university that conferred a bachelor's, master's, or doctor's degree in Humanics ... or anyone who knew what that degree was!

With the Intercollegiate Bureau's help, an association of college and university presidents called the American Council on Education had already updated the 1895 Intercollegiate Code between 1932 and 1935 without making significant changes to the list of twenty-two IBAC degree colours, so to address some of the colour problems the Intercollegiate Bureau of Academic Costume was encountering in the late 1950s, this 1935 Academic Costume Code was revised again between 1959 and 1960, with a few additional 'subject colors' added at that time and in 1961. For American degree colours, this mid-century revision was nothing short of disastrous.⁷

⁵ Answers: A = Social Work (citron); B = Nursing (apricot); C = Engineering (orange); D = Science (golden yellow); E = Agriculture (maize).

⁶ 'Degrees', *A Cyclopaedia of Education*, ed. Paul Monroe (New York: Macmillan, 1911), pp. 285-86.

⁷ For a more detailed history of this revision, see Kenneth L. Suit, Jr, 'Conforming to the Es-

‘Degree colors’ become ‘subject colors’

The Intercollegiate Bureau of Academic Costume and the American Council on Education revised the 1935 Academic Costume Code in the late 1950s because there had been a sharp increase in the number of degree titles American colleges and universities were using after World War II. Since the degree title determined the degree colour used on the hood, and because the eight broad degree colour categories in the 1895 Code had been extensively subdivided during the sixty years thereafter, the Intercollegiate Bureau had run out of distinctive shades of colours to assign to these new degrees.

American colleges and universities were using a greater variety of degree titles because professional degrees were becoming more popular with students—many of whom were veterans of World War II attending college under the GI Bill. The way American institutions distinguished between a traditional liberal arts (or research) degree in a particular subject and a new professional (or technical) degree in the same subject was to have separate degree titles for each pedagogical approach. For instance, as part of a traditional liberal arts education, an agriculture programme might require coursework in history, literature, philosophy, and so on. Or, as part of a technical education, an agriculture programme might primarily require vocational training and coursework in the profession and science of agriculture, with very few (if any) courses in the liberal arts. Both programmes would confer a degree in agriculture, but to reflect the different pedagogical approaches to the subject, colleges and universities assigned a different degree title to each. The Master of Science degree with a major in agriculture would be a traditional liberal arts degree, whereas the Master of Agriculture degree would be a professional or technical degree. Thus the wording on a student’s diploma would indicate which pedagogical approach the student had taken, either liberal arts or professional.

Because it used a semiotic ‘code of signals’⁸ by which the degree title determined the degree colour used on the hood, the 1895 Intercollegiate Code of Academic Costume was able to visually distinguish between these liberal arts and professional degrees: the Master of Science degree in agriculture would use a hood edged golden yellow (for Science) and the Master of Agriculture degree would use a hood edged maize (for Agriculture). This was the foremost reason the Intercollegiate Bureau had subdivided many of the original eight degree colours from 1895: the Bureau needed to distinguish between the degree titles of traditional liberal arts degrees and these new professional degrees.

But to better define a liberal arts degree’s major (the primary subject of one’s coursework), in the 1930s some colleges and universities began to ‘tag’ some of their Bachelor or Master of Science degrees (and to a lesser extent, their Bachelor or Master of Arts degrees) with the pedagogical focus of the degree. So the ‘Master of Science’ degree in agriculture mentioned above might be relabelled a ‘Master of Science in Agriculture’ degree, the tagged degree thus displaying on the student’s diploma the faculty of the degree (Science) and subject area (Agriculture). By the late 1950s tagged degrees had become epidemic. So an important question for the Intercollegiate Bureau and the American Council on Education became: which part of the tagged degree title would determine the degree colour: the faculty or the tagged subject?

established Standards: American Degree Colours (1936–1961), *TBS*, 17 (2017), pp. 39–75, <https://doi.org/10.4148/2475-7799.1144>.

⁸ ‘Albany Bureau of Academic Costume: Caps, Gowns and Regalia for American Colleges Originate Here’, *The [Albany, N.Y.] Argus*, 27 July 1902.

The root of this problem lies in the nomenclature of American degree titles. By the end of the nineteenth century, American colleges and universities had begun to standardize the degree titles for liberal arts degrees as degrees in Arts, Science, or Philosophy. There was quite a bit of overlap in the curricular requirements for these degrees, which is why the BA, BS, MA, MS, and PhD degrees were conferred by departments that were becoming consolidated (at larger institutions) into schools or colleges of Arts and Sciences (traditionally called Philosophy and Natural Philosophy).⁹ But what did these degree titles mean? Was a Bachelor of Science degree a bachelor's degree in science? Not necessarily. In American nomenclature, a Bachelor of Science degree was (in most cases) becoming a liberal arts degree without a foreign language requirement, or a liberal arts degree with a few more required courses in general science. But the BS degree could be conferred in a non-science discipline, like history, literature, or theology.

In 1906, a grumpy professor wrote:

It is, indeed, practically impossible that a degree should indicate exactly the scholastic attainment or training of its holder. But there was a time, not so long ago, when there was an idea in America that the degree ought to designate very exactly the nature of the academic training of the holder. Hence the degree Ph.B. was given to men who had not studied Greek and other degrees were invented for other special needs. But few people know what was the outcome in fact, as also in logic. In Emerson's College Year Book of ten years ago is a list of degrees given by American Colleges [with] over two hundred different degrees. Most of them are such as people in general have never heard of: M.P.L. means Master or Mistress of Polite Literature, M.B.Sc. means Master of Business Science, D.O. means Doctor of Oratory. No one could remember what such things indicate. The effect is just the same as with the university hoods used to indicate the [wearers'] degrees. There is no one, except the agent of the furnishing shop who can tell what they mean. At any great university occasion, a part of the fun consists in asking, What is that green and white hood with the orange border? The variety of hoods and colors certainly makes an attractive sight, but it conveys no information. Nor does the variety of college degrees. And if we reduce the variety to unity, the case is not bettered. The degree does not and cannot be made to serve as a true indication of the academic training of its holder.¹⁰

Tagged degrees were invented as a way to address this problem. A tagged degree clearly stated the area of academic concentration (or major) of the person possessing it.

Fine. But so that the visual distinction between liberal arts and professional degrees would be maintained, the Intercollegiate Bureau of Academic Costume said that the primary degree title determined the degree colour, not the tagged subject of the degree or the major. To clarify this matter, a late 1920s booklet from the IBAC said that the velvet trim should be in the 'proper width to indicate the degree and of a color signifying the department to which the degree pertains', helpfully providing customers with an example of the system in practice:

It is important to note that the reading of the degree, and not the department in which major work was done, governs the color proper for the velvet of the hood. Thus a degree conferred as 'Bachelor of Science in Engineering' requires the gold yellow of Science and not the orange of Engineering.¹¹

9 By the early twentieth century the PhB and PhM were a dying breed of degree, as was the DSci degree.

10 Edward E. Hale, Jr, 'The Abolition of Academic Degrees', *The Bookman*, 23 (5) (July 1906), p. 563.

11 John Erwin, *The History of Academic Costume in America* (Albany, N.Y.: Cotrell & Leonard

An IBAC catalogue from 1948 said nearly the same thing: in selecting the velvet degree colour trim for a hood, the Bureau privileged the degree faculty over the degree subject or major.¹² Thus a Master of Science in agriculture and a Master of Science in Agriculture—both liberal arts degrees—would use hoods edged in golden yellow (for Science). But a Master of Agriculture degree—a professional degree—would use a hood edged with maize (for Agriculture).

The American Council on Education was less sure. In their 1935 Academic Costume Code (an update of the 1895 Intercollegiate Code of Academic Costume which was written with the help of the Intercollegiate Bureau of Academic Costume), the ACE said that the coloured edging of the hood and the trim on the doctoral gown

should be distinctive of the Faculty or subject to which the degree pertains, as indicated by the wording of the diploma¹³

which meant the Master of Science degree would use golden yellow to indicate the faculty (Science), but the Master of Science in Agriculture degree could ignore the faculty (Science) and use maize to indicate the subject (Agriculture) if desired. Under the 1935 Academic Costume Code, then, the visual distinction between a liberal arts degree in agriculture and a professional degree in agriculture began to be defaced. This problem can be illustrated thus:

Type of degree	Degree title	Degree or Subject colour	
		IBAC (1895)	ACE (1935)
Liberal arts degree	'Master of Science' in agriculture	golden yellow	golden yellow
Liberal arts degree	'Master of Science in Agriculture'	golden yellow	golden yellow or maize
Professional degree	'Master of Agriculture'	maize	maize

When the 1935 Academic Costume Code was revised between 1959 and 1960—again with the help of the Intercollegiate Bureau of Academic Costume—the American Council on Education rewrote the description above to state that the coloured velvet of the hood edging

should be distinctive of the subject to which the degree pertains. For example the trimming for the degree of Master of Science in Agriculture should be maize, representing agriculture, rather than golden yellow, representing science.¹⁴

Note something important here. The phrase 'as indicated by the wording of the diploma' in the 1935 Code was excised from the 1960 Code, which meant the degree title no longer mattered. The ACE intended any degree in agriculture to use a hood edged with the 'subject color' of maize:

for the Intercollegiate Bureau of Academic Costume, n.d. but c.1928), pp. 11, 14.

12 O.J. Hoppner, *Academic Costume in America* (Albany, N.Y.: Cotrell & Leonard for the Intercollegiate Bureau of Academic Costume, 1948), p. 11.

13 *An Academic Costume Code* (Washington, D.C.: American Council on Education, 1935), p. 4. Also Clarence Stephen Marsh, ed., *American Universities and Colleges*, 3rd edn (Washington, D.C.: American Council on Education, 1936), p. 1065.

14 'Memorandum' including 'Appendix II: An Academic Costume Code and Academic Ceremony Guide' (12 October 1959), and also 'Appendix II: An Academic Costume Code and Academic Ceremony Guide' (29 October 1959), both in Hoover Institute Archives, American Council on Education Collection, Box 468, Folder 8 (henceforth Hoover ACE). Also Mary Irwin, *American Universities and Colleges*, 8th edn (Washington D.C.: American Council on Education, 1960), p. 1135.

Type of degree	Degree title	Degree or Subject colour	
		IBAC (1895)	ACE (1960)
Liberal arts degree	'Master of Science' in agriculture	golden yellow	maize
Liberal arts degree	'Master of Science in Agriculture'	golden yellow	maize
Professional degree	'Master of Agriculture'	maize	maize

Changing the degree colour to a 'subject color' indicating the major subject of study marked a radical change to the semiotic system the Intercollegiate Bureau and the American Council on Education had been using to that point, because if one's area of specialty determines the colour of the edging on one's hood, an observer is not able to identify one's degree title by looking at the hood. As a 1965 guide to the American doctoral degree explained,

What is important in determining the proper subject color is the field of concentration of the study for the degree, not the degree itself. For example, all doctorates in agriculture (whether Ph.D., Ed.D., Sc.D., D.Agr., or other) have a subject color of maize. This would apply to a wide variety of fields of concentration such as agricultural education, vocational agriculture, animal husbandry, agronomy, dairy science, and horticulture.

All doctorates in engineering (whether Ph.D., Sc.D., Eng.D., or other) have a subject color of orange. Again a sizable number of fields would be included, examples being aeronautical engineering, ceramic engineering, chemical engineering, electrical engineering, and mechanical engineering. All doctorates in the sciences (whether Ph.D., Sc.D., or other) have a subject color of golden yellow. Included here would be the fields of biology, chemistry, geology, mathematics, and physics. Some would want to include psychology.¹⁵

Minutes from the meetings of the American Council on Education committee that produced the 1960 Academic Costume Code show that the committee wanted to endorse a 'subject color' approach so that American academic hoods would 1) more precisely indicate the graduate's primary area of study and 2) make commencement ceremonies a more colourful affair. This was because the Intercollegiate Bureau's 1895 Code caused most edging on academic hoods in the US to be either white (for the MA including tagged MA degrees), golden yellow (for the MS including tagged MS degrees), or dark blue (for the PhD), reflecting the overwhelming popularity of these three degrees. The subject colour approach of the 1960 Code would thereby create more hood edging colour variety among graduates, and indicate more precisely their academic specialties.

The ACE now found itself between a rock and a hard place.

One of the things that brought that ACE committee together in 1959 was a complaint that there were too many degree colours. But if the 1960 Code suddenly allowed the graduate's major to determine the hood edging, the committee would have had to significantly increase the number of authorized subject colours to incorporate the hundreds of different academic majors available at American colleges and universities. But it did not. The committee only increased the 1935 list of twenty-two 'faculty and subject' colours to twenty-six 'subject' colours by the end of 1961 (for the ACE; the IBAC used a slightly longer list of twenty-nine colours).¹⁶

¹⁵ George K. Schweitzer, *The Doctorate: A Handbook* (Springfield, Ill.: Charles C. Thomas, 1965), pp. 66–67. David A. Lockmiller, a member of the ACE committee that wrote the 1960 Academic Costume Code, described the new subject colour policy in a similar fashion; see his *Scholars on Parade* (New York: Macmillan, 1969), p. 191.

¹⁶ The Intercollegiate Bureau officially used the twenty-six subject colours of the 1960 Academic Costume Code. See, for instance, O. J. Hoppner, *Academic Costume in America* (Albany, N.Y.:

Nor did the committee proactively rename or combine some of the colour categories in the 1895 and 1935 Codes so as to better incorporate the plethora of academic majors in American colleges and universities. Some of the narrow subjects in the 1935 Code were not merged in the 1960 Code into broader categories (Physical Education was not folded into Education, for instance). Thus, by privileging some subject colours that had been authorized between 1895 and 1961 and at the same time ignoring others that had been left out, it was as though the ACE committee perversely said: 'Graduates, you may now wear a color that represents your major ... but we're not going to give most of you a color that represents your major. Tough luck.'

For example, if a student with a Master of Science degree majored in journalism, he or she would get to wear a hood edged crimson because the ACE assigned Journalism that colour in 1959. But a student with a Master of Science degree who majored in radio-television would wear ... what? White (for Arts, Letters, and Humanities)? Golden yellow (for Science)? Silver grey (for Speech)? Brown (for Fine Arts)? The American Council on Education had nothing to say about this problem because it never authorized a subject colour for radio-television. Now, if the ACE wanted one's hood edging to represent the major of one's degree but did not want to increase the number of colours, the ACE committee could have enlarged some of the existing subject categories, so that crimson became not only the colour for journalism alone, but also the colour for all majors in Mass Media (including Journalism). Or better yet, the ACE could have taken the existing colour for Speech (silver grey) and enlarged it to become Communication and Mass Media, which would have allowed crimson to be retired. But that is not what the American Council on Education did. Instead, it authorized only three new subject colours in 1959 and one in 1961. And then the ACE stopped, leaving the muddled thinking behind their 1960 Code to bedevil American academic costume thereafter, leading to what can only be called 'semiotic incoherence' among American academic hoods today.

After 1961 the Intercollegiate Bureau of Academic Costume and the American Council on Education washed their hands of the 'subject color' system they had created. There is a strong sense that they knew it was broken, that the 1960 revision of the Academic Costume Code was confusing, and that the best thing to do in these circumstances was to whistle past that graveyard and hope for the best.

In revising the elegantly simple degree colour policy of the 1895 Intercollegiate Code of Academic Costume so that the major 'subject' of the degree determined the colour of one's hood edging, not the prepositional 'faculty' in the degree title, the American Council on Education had first in 1935 and then in 1960 sown the wind. The Intercollegiate Bureau of Academic Costume had agreed to this folly. Now they would both reap the whirlwind. The seeds of the 1960 Academic Costume Code would yield only a feeble and sickly crop, and strangers (primarily academic costume manufacturers, universities, and professional organizations) would devour the last grains.

Cotrell & Leonard, n.d. but *c.* 1965), p. 7. But privately, the IBAC included three additional degree colours in the list they provided for potential clients: Optometry (seafoam green), Podiatry (Nile green), and Social Science (cream). See, for instance, the degree colour lists the Bureau supplied to Kevin Sheard in *Academic Heraldry in America* (Marquette: Northern Michigan College Press, 1962), p. 7; Hugh Smith and Kevin Sheard in *Academic Dress and Insignia of the World*, 3 vols (Cape Town: A. A. Balkema, 1970), Vol. II, p. 1529; and to George W. Shaw and the other authors of *Degrees and Hoods of the World's Universities and Colleges* (Lewes, Sussex: W. E. Baxter, 1972), p. 116.

Stagnation and confusion

After the American Council on Education and the Intercollegiate Bureau of Academic Costume agreed to adopt the 1960 Academic Costume Code and added an additional subject colour for Home Economics in 1961, both organizations lapsed into a lethargic state of academic costume ennui that has lasted more than a half century. Both the ACE and the IBAC lacked the will and energy to supervise the American systems of academic costume they each had played a part in creating, mainly because the number of professional degrees and academic majors had increased so much in the US that the degree and subject colour systems of the IBAC and ACE had become unwieldy, and neither organization was willing to update or manage these systems in a clear and unambiguous manner.

The Intercollegiate Bureau of Academic Costume's degree colour list was slightly longer than the subject colour list of the ACE because the IBAC was obligated to assign colours to new degrees authorized by the Board of Regents of the University of the State of New York, and so the Bureau briefly tried to keep up with those changes. But O. J. Hoppner, the director of the Intercollegiate Bureau, was ready to throw in the towel. In 1961 a reporter from an Elmira, New York, newspaper explained why.

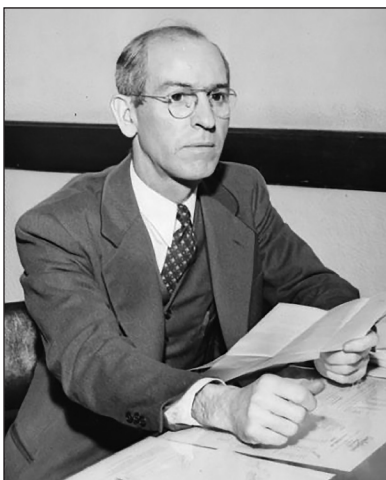


Fig. 3. O. J. Hoppner, the President of the Intercollegiate Bureau of Academic Costume and General Manager at Cotrell & Leonard, on 28 April 1949. Hoppner served as an adviser to the American Council on Education committees that wrote the 1935 and 1960 Academic Costume Codes.

A velvet trimming adorning the hood forms a yoke about the neck and represents the field of study. That trimming can be one of 25 colors. It's here the problems begin.

The rainbow has run dry, as far as Hoppner and his employer, Cotrell & Leonard, are concerned.

Years and years ago, the matter of degrees was less complicated. The areas of study were divided simply: medicine, science, theology, law, and the arts.

Today there are 33 separate fields in which degrees are awarded. The 25 colors, approved under an intercollegiate code, overlap in a few instances.

As specialization expands, there are new requests for colors. Hoppner says there'll be no more.

'Look at the greens,' Hoppner said pointing to the chart. A degree in medicine is represented by green. Physical education is a sage green and surgical chiropody is a Nile green.

'Or you tell me what color apricot is? What is apricot to you may not be apricot to me,' Hoppner said. Under the code, apricot is for a nursing degree.¹⁷

¹⁷ Robert Markowitz, 'Rainbow Robes: Doctorate Gowns Lose Drabness', *The Sunday Telegram: Elmira (N.Y.) Star-Gazette Sunday Edition*, 21 May 1961. Note that Hoppner refers to Surgical Chiropody, which was an official degree colour only in the IBAC list, not the ACE list. Parsing the numbers quoted in this article is difficult, but it appears that the '25 colors' in the article referred to the ACE list of authorized subject colours from early 1961, and the '33 separate fields in which degrees are awarded' referred to all of the degree colours the IBAC had officially approved since 1895, including colours for two degrees (Humanics and Philanthropy) the IBAC had removed from its list and colours for four degrees to which the IBAC had either recently assigned a colour (Social Science) or had considered assigning or briefly assigned colours in the late 1950s (Naprapathy, Political Sci-

This interview with Hoppner was made only weeks before the IBAC and ACE approved the maroon colour for Home Economics, bringing the final total number by the beginning of 1962 to twenty-six subject colours for the ACE and twenty-nine degree colours for the IBAC. But after that Hoppner held his ground and the Bureau did not approve another new degree colour until 2001, a year after he died at age 101.

After maroon for Home Economics was authorized in 1961, the American Council on Education and the Intercollegiate Bureau of Academic Costume fielded numerous requests for new subject (i.e., major) colours. This desire for more colours was due in part to the ACE's ossified subject colour list, which included broad subject categories like Science, Fine Arts, Engineering, Medicine, Education, and so on, as well as very narrow subject categories like Physical Education, Economics, Home Economics, Journalism, Forestry, and Library Science. Other specific majors and subjects were left out. So—the argument for new subject colours went—if Education and Physical Education had each been given their own separate subject colours, why should mathematics have to use the same golden yellow colour as biology, physics, and chemistry? Why not authorize separate colours for each of these majors, as the 1960 Code permitted? The obvious rebuttal was that there are so many academic subjects and majors in existence that assigning distinctive colours to each one would be impossible and impractical.

In 1967 the American Council on Education attempted to silence some of these requests by proposing a new section to the Code entitled 'Additional Guidance on Costume'.¹⁸ As this guidance was finally worded when first published in 1973, the ACE stated that 'adaptations' to the Code

are entirely acceptable as long as they are reasoned and faithful to the spirit of the traditions which give rise to the code. They are not acceptable when they further subdivide the recognized disciplines and designate new colors for such subdivisions. The spectrum of colors which manufacturers can utilize and which can be clearly identified as distinct from other colors is for practical purposes exhausted. Problems may arise with emerging broad interdisciplinary areas; it is recommended that these be resolved by using the color of the discipline most nearly indicative of the new area. New disciplinary designations for colors traditionally assigned would not be readily recognizable nor useful.¹⁹

The Council then attempted to provide several examples of how an 'emerging interdisciplinary field' might employ a subject colour for its hoods. In what Stephen L. Wolgast describes as 'astonishingly vague information' within a 'ridiculous framework',²⁰ the ACE stated that the hood trim for physical therapy degrees and similar subjects

ence, and Retailing). Home Economics would be added to the Bureau's list before the end of the year, bringing to thirty-four the total number of degree colours either officially authorized or considered for authorization by the Intercollegiate Bureau from 1895 to 1961.

18 See the memo in the Columbia University Archives entitled 'Regulations Affecting Academic Costume' (9 November 1967) from the Commission on Academic Affairs of the American Council on Education to member institutions.

19 W. Todd Furniss, ed., *American Universities and Colleges*, 11th edn (Washington, D.C.: American Council on Education, 1973), pp. 1757–58. This was also the edition of *American Universities and Colleges* that first allowed degrees in Commerce, Accountancy, and Business to use the alternative colour of sapphire blue (see below). In other words, the ACE could not be counted upon to follow its own new subject colour ban.

20 'The Intercollegiate Code of Academic Costume: An Introduction', *TBS*, 9 (2009), p. 30, <https://doi.org/10.4148/2475-7799.1070>.



Author's collection

Fig. 4. Two Ohio University PhD hoods from the 1960s. On the left is the academic hood of Virginia Marie Branson, who, in 1961, was the first woman to graduate from Ohio University with a Doctor of Philosophy degree. Her dissertation was entitled ‘An Investigation of the Possible Existence of a “Better” Ear in Normal Hearing Young Adults’. Because neither the American Council on Education nor the Intercollegiate Bureau of Academic Costume had created a subject colour for ‘speech and hearing therapy’, Ohio University decided that the subject colour for Dr Branson’s hood would be white, the colour the 1960 Code assigned to majors in ‘Arts, Letters, Humanities’. One can only guess why the university selected white, as silver grey (Speech), golden yellow (Science), green (Medicine), or salmon pink (Public Health) were available subject colour categories. As a result, Dr. Branson’s hood becomes impossible to read with any kind of semiotic precision, except to say that it is a hood for a doctoral degree of some sort.

On the right is the academic hood for Catherine McQuaid Steiner, who earned a PhD in ‘comparative arts’ from Ohio University in 1967. If the university had used the subject colour approach of the 1960 Academic Costume Code, the velvet edging of this hood would have been white. Instead, it is dark blue. Evidently, Ohio had by this point abandoned the 1960 Code and returned to the 1895 Intercollegiate Code, whereby the velvet edging indicated the degree title—in this case, dark blue for Doctor of *Philosophy*.

Both hoods were manufactured by the C. E. Ward Company of New London, Ohio, at that time the official supplier of academic dress for state colleges and universities in Ohio. The Intercollegiate Bureau had assigned Ohio a hood lined olive green with a white chevron. The shade was supposed to be dark, to match the official shade of dark olive green used by the university, but Ward inaccurately used a lighter shade of olive green in their hoods, as shown here. The university did not seem to mind—the inaccurate shade continued to be used without change on the hoods Ohio University ordered from Ward until 1968, when the company was purchased by Oak Hall.

should be white if the degree is awarded in arts (BA or MA), golden yellow if in science (BS or MS). Interdisciplinary doctorates should be distinguished by the colors of the principal field under which the degree is awarded. Thus, urban affairs may be distinguished by copper (economics), peacock blue (public administration), or another field already assigned a color above. Multiplication of color assignment is impracticable.

So did the subject colour indicate the degree title (as in the 1895 Code) or the subject of the major (as in the 1960 Code)? ‘Yes’, the ACE’s 1973 Academic Costume Code seemed to say.

Thus by 1973 the American Council on Education had declared a moratorium on new subject colours and had given contradictory advice about new degrees and subjects, which left institutions to splutter and splash in this muddied water. Most chose to stay with the 1895 Intercollegiate Code and its degree colour system. In a 1985 article called ‘Academic Colors ... Academic Confusion’, S. Mark Strickland and John L. Fluitt pointed out that the 1960 Code ‘clearly ... [specifies] that *the color of the subject area to which the degree pertains* and not that in the title of the degree should be used in hood trimmings.’²¹ But they were sad to report that this was not the way everyone was interpreting the Code. A year earlier, Strickland and Fluitt had conducted a survey of 452 colleges and universities, asking each one to describe the colour of the velvet trim on its Master of Arts, Master of Science, Master of Education, Doctor of Education, and Doctor of Philosophy hoods. Most of the 300 institutions that responded and were tallied used the degree colour (white for the MA, golden yellow for the MS, light blue for the MEd and EdD, and dark blue for the PhD). Conversely, depending upon the degree, only 16 per cent to 31 per cent of these institutions used colours that indicated the subject or major of the degree. ‘It seems apparent from these totals’, Strickland and Fluitt observed,

that in practice the name of the degree is the major factor in determining the color of the hood trimming prescribed by a large majority of institutions. This is true for every type of degree, and especially the Doctor of Philosophy. Of course, some of the selections of the color of the subject in the title of the degree [more accurately: the ‘faculty’ in the title of the degree] might actually be subject area color choices since in many instances the subject area studied is the same as that in the title of the degree. However, it seems improbable that this could be the case for the Doctor of Philosophy degree, and it is in this degree where the largest majority of institutions use the academic color of the subject [‘faculty’] in the title of the degree.

A review of the literature suggests that it is likely that this wide-spread current use of the color of the subject [‘faculty’] in the title of the degree rather than that of the subject studied for the degree reflects earlier practices.²²

Indeed. Old habits die hard. Ever since the Intercollegiate Costume Code was written in 1895 most American colleges and universities had been using degree colours to indicate the ‘faculty’ in *the wording of the wearer’s degree*. The ‘subject color’ dictum of the American Council on Education’s 1960 Academic Costume Code had not significantly changed this practice because American faculty are very much aware that some degrees are research or liberal arts degrees and some degrees are professional degrees—and research degrees are more respected in the collegiate environment.

21 Emphasis in original. In *College and University: The Journal of the American Association of Collegiate Registrars*, 61.1 (1985), p. 27.

22 Ibid., p. 29.

Put bluntly: egos are involved. A faculty member with a PhD in Agriculture wants an academic costume that shows that he has done the stringent and time-consuming research that is required to earn a Doctor of Philosophy degree, not a vocational, less-rigorous Doctor of Agriculture degree. Therefore, he wants dark blue hood trim, not maize coloured trim, thank you very much. It is of no concern to him what the 1960 Code says about it.²³

Not long after Strickland and Fluitt published their research, the American Council on Education waved the white flag, at least in the case of the Doctor of Philosophy degree. The Council's 1987 edition of *American Universities and Colleges* makes an exception to the subject colour policy of the 1960 Code, allowing hood and gown trim for PhDs to be dark blue if desired. 'In the case of the Doctor of Philosophy degree', the ACE said,

the dark blue color is used to represent the mastery of the discipline of learning and scholarship in any field that is attested to by the awarding of this degree and is not intended to represent the field of philosophy.²⁴

But again the ACE fumbled the ball. By explaining the dark blue colour assignment as a way of indicating 'mastery of the discipline of learning and scholarship' the Council obfuscated a very simple fact: since 1895 American degree colours have been used to indicate the wording of the degree as it appears on one's diploma, and the wording of one's degree is very important because it indicates the substantive differences between a research degree and a vocational degree in the same subject.

Strickland and Fluitt's research demonstrated that most American colleges and universities understood this better than the ACE and therefore in the mid-1980s these institutions were still following the degree colour regulations of the 1895 Intercollegiate Code of Academic Costume. Fewer were following the subject colour regulations of the 1960 Academic Costume Code. This division of practice has continued to the present, which means that today there is no longer a single standard for determining the colour of the hood edging used by all American colleges and universities, or by American academic costume manufacturers.²⁵ Sadly, the goal of having a standardized, shared, and uniform system of American academic costume envisioned by the 1895 Intercollegiate Commission on Academic Costume was achieved, but has not endured.

23 This is one of the reasons US First Lady Jill Biden's insistence on being called Doctor Jill Biden rubbed many people the wrong way in December 2020. Biden is a Doctor of Education, which is not as academically (or culturally) prestigious as a Doctor of Philosophy or a Doctor of Medicine.

24 'An Academic Costume Code and an Academic Ceremony Guide', *American Universities and Colleges*, 13th edn (New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1987), p. 1918.

25 See, for example, the brochure illustrated in Figure 7 from Jostens, a company still using the degree colour system of the 1895 Code. But then there is the University of the State of New York, the governing body responsible for accrediting all of the educational institutions incorporated in the state of New York, which uses what appears to be the standards of the 1935 Academic Costume Code, whereby the degree title still determines the colour used for the velvet edging of the hood, but the subject of a tagged degree is given preference over the faculty in the degree title. Notice, for example, that on p. 3 of *Academic Heraldry* (Albany, N.Y.: The University of the State of New York, 2000), the 'bachelor of science in engineering degree' should have orange trimming for engineering, rather than the golden yellow of science. The doctor of philosophy degree requires dark blue because the degree designation does not necessarily identify the major field of study.'

Colours for academic legitimacy

The American Council on Education and the Intercollegiate Bureau of Academic Costume may have been reluctant to add new subject or degree colours to their official palettes after maroon for Home Economics was approved in 1961, but this has not prevented academic costume manufacturers, colleges and universities, and academic professional organizations from authorizing new hood edging colours to meet a specific purpose: academic legitimacy for new, narrowly defined, and specialized professional degree programmes. And in the higher education marketplace, one way to symbolize the pedagogical legitimacy of a new vocational programme is to stake a claim on a new subject or degree colour for that profession.

Chiropractic: silver

Design: yellow

*Human Environmental Sciences:*²⁶ *maroon*

Industrial Arts: burnt orange

Technology: red

Many of the official degree and subject colours in the 1895 and 1960 Codes began as unauthorized hood edging colours that had been adopted by a particular college or university to represent a new pedagogical faculty at their institution. Sometimes the Intercollegiate Bureau of Academic Costume would officially approve one of these local colour choices for national use: Dentistry (lilac), Humanics (crimson), Nursing (apricot), Optometry (seafoam green), Physical Education (sage green), and Veterinary Science (grey) all began this way. But sometimes the Bureau would decide not to authorize a local colour for national use. In the 1940s, for example, degree colours for Statistics (light rose) and Textiles (rose) were used at North Carolina State College, but these colours were never officially approved by the IBAC.²⁷

To complicate matters even further, the American Council on Education never approved the Intercollegiate Bureau's official colours for Optometry (seafoam green), Podiatry (Nile green), and Social Science (cream). Regarding the colour for Optometry, the Bureau had officially authorized seafoam green in 1949, but ten years later the Council refused to add it to the 1960 Code.²⁸ Efforts by the American Academy of Optometry to obtain ACE approval of seafoam continued in 1975²⁹ and 1988³⁰ but were unsuccessful. Situations like this led to slightly different lists of 'official' degree and subject colours in the United States by the Intercollegiate Bureau of Academic Costume and the American

26 Human Environmental Sciences is different from Home Economics. At the universities I reviewed, the degree seems (to me) to be a hodgepodge of barely related subjects: fashion merchandising, nutrition, child education, hospitality management, health sciences, etc.

27 See Suit, 'Conforming to the Established Standards', pp. 39–75.

28 Compare Raymond F. Howes, 'Memorandum to Members of the Committee on Academic Costume and Ceremonies' (23 June 1959) with 'A Code for Academic Costumes and Ceremonies: Second Version' (7 July 1959), both in the Hoover ACE Box 468, Folder 9.

29 Henry W. Hofstetter, 'The Mysteries of Optometry's Green', *Optometry and Vision Science* [The Journal of the American Academy of Optometry], 67.2 (February 1990), p. 72.

30 'Council Activities: Miscellaneous Activities,' *Journal of Optometric Education*, 14.1 (Fall 1988), p. 27.

Figure 5. A Doctor of Chiropractic hood from Sherman College of Chiropractic in Spartanburg, South Carolina, manufactured in 2011 by the Herff Jones Company. The hood is edged with ‘silver’ (light grey) velvet and lined with satin in an approximation of the school colours of the college in 2006 when the student graduated: an unusual medium reddish-brown colour (PMS 478—a colour similar to the colour of dyed leather) and white. Other manufacturers of hoods for this college have used a very dark brown shade of satin, also with a white chevron. Many American college and universities are strangely inconsistent in the shades they allow hood manufacturers to use to depict their school colours.

In the US, holders of doctoral degrees are permitted to wear a cap with a gold tassel, as here. For doctoral degrees that are assigned light degree colours like silver, the velvet trim on the gown is usually black (as here), but velvet matching the colour of the edging of the hood is permitted. Doctor of Chiropractic hood, gown, and cap courtesy Dr Ashley Stiltner.



Council on Education, not including various ‘unofficial’ lists of degree and subject colours published by American academic costume manufacturers today, and published lists of sometimes unique degree or subject colours used at individual colleges and universities.

The short list of new degree or subject colours on the previous page has been gleaned from the lists of various academic costume manufacturers and from the commencement programmes of various colleges and universities. This list is by no means exhaustive; rather, it is intended to illustrate a few of the unofficial degree or subject colours one may see at a commencement ceremony today. Because the IBAC and the ACE have already officially assigned some of these colours to other subjects, or the colours are so similar to the existing official colours of other disciplines, sartorial confusion is the inevitable result, leaving these degree and subject colour choices with little to recommend them.

For example, the silver hood edging some chiropractic colleges are using for their doctoral hoods is indistinguishable from the silver grey colour the IBAC and ACE officially assigned to Speech (which itself is sometimes redefined at some schools as being the colour for Communication and/or Mass Media).³¹ So from a pragmatic perspective, silver should not be used for degrees in chiropractic medicine. Instead, cerise would be a better option for the Doctor of Chiropractic hood. It was the colour historically assigned to Naprapathy, a medical practice related to Chiropractic.³²

³¹ Still other schools use journalism’s crimson as the colour for communication and/or mass media. Further complicating matters is the light shade of grey some academic costume manufacturers use for Veterinary Medicine hoods.

³² For more about this historical precedent, see Suit, ‘Conforming to the Established Standards’, pp. 46–47.

Harvard University uses hoods edged with yellow velvet for degrees in design,³³ which is easily confused with the official lemon yellow colour of Library Science or even the golden yellow colour of Science. At the University of Missouri, degrees in Human Environmental Sciences use maroon trim for their hoods,³⁴ the colour the IBAC and ACE already assigned to Home Economics in 1961. Until 2007, an academic costume company named Academic Apparel sold hoods edged with burnt orange velvet for graduates in the Industrial Arts, a color intentionally similar to the official orange of Engineering.³⁵ And degrees conferred by the Polytechnic Institute at Purdue University, like the Doctor of Technology degree, use hoods edged with red velvet,³⁶ making them indistinguishable from hoods for theological degrees (scarlet).

Human Resources: dusk

Physician Assistant: jade green

Gerontology: gold

Dance: amethyst

Occasionally a school will select a unique or distinctive degree or subject colour for a new degree, discipline, or major. Rutgers University and the University of New Hampshire both use 'dusk'³⁷ as the hood edging for degrees in Human Resources. The University of Southern California trims the hoods for its Physician Assistant degrees with jade green velvet, which is intentionally within the green colour family the Intercollegiate Bureau traditionally assigned to medical degrees. But the University of Southern California also uses gold for Gerontology (easily confused with the golden yellow of Science) and amethyst for Dance (easily confused with the purple of Law).³⁸

Architecture: blue-violet

Commerce, Accountancy, and Business: sapphire blue

Sometimes an existing official IBAC or ACE degree or subject colour has been reassigned an alternative colour for academic or aesthetic reasons. For example, in the early 1900s

33 See Cynthia W. Rossano, 'Reading the Regalia: A Guide to Deciphering the Academic Dress Code', *Harvard Magazine*, May 1999, as well as Nicholas A. Hoffmann, 'Crow's Feet and Crimson: Academic Dress at Harvard', *TBS*, 9 (2009), p. 52, <https://doi.org/10.4148/2475-7799.1071>.

34 At <<https://www.themizzoustore.com/p-191297-masters-maroon-human-environmental-sciences-hood.aspx>> [accessed 25 May 2021].

35 See <www.capsngowns4less.com>, then Faculty & Judicial, and download the Word document University Colors [retrieved 25 May 2021]. Academic Apparel (also known as Academic Cap & Gown) is one of the subsidiaries of the Academic Church and Choir Gown Manufacturing Company, Inc., established in 1946. The company no longer offers burnt orange for degrees in the Industrial Arts, having reassigned this discipline 'science gold' (golden yellow). See: <www.academicapparel.com/caps/regalia_colors.html> [retrieved 25 May 2021].

36 At <<https://www.purdueglobal.edu/student-experience/graduation/cap-gowns/>> [retrieved 25 May 2021].

37 Rutgers's 2018 commencement programme included the description. For the New Hampshire, see <<http://www.unh.edu/unhtoday/2013/05/colors-commencement>> [accessed 25 May 2021]. Dusk is typically a greyish light blue or greyish light violet colour, like the colour of the sky immediately after sunset, as twilight begins.

38 'Official Colors for Degrees', University of Southern California, at <<https://commencement.usc.edu/history/official-colors-for-degrees/>> [retrieved 25 May 2021].

Harvard preferred to use 'golden brown' instead of maize for its degrees in Agriculture, a minor variation of hue.³⁹ Other colour substitutions have been more extreme.

The Bureau considered architecture to be one of the fine arts, so Bachelor and Master of Architecture degrees were assigned the brown degree colour of Fine Arts.⁴⁰ But many art historians consider architecture to be a field of design or applied art, separate from the fine arts, and it is a fact that many universities have created Schools or Colleges of Architecture outside their Schools or Colleges of Fine Arts.⁴¹ In these cases, blue-violet has been used as a degree or subject colour for architecture at places like Yale University, Virginia Tech, the University of Notre Dame, and the University of Southern California.⁴²

The colour drab used for Business degrees has been singularly unpopular ever since the Intercollegiate Bureau of Academic Costume officially adopted that unattractive shade of greyish khaki around 1903. By the 1970s, so many prominent east coast schools had substituted sapphire blue for drab that the American Council on Education felt obligated to address the problem.⁴³

In the 11th edition (1973) of *American Universities and Colleges*, the ACE began to officially permit the use of sapphire blue instead of drab for Commerce, Accountancy, and Business. However, the ACE also stated in a footnote that sapphire blue was 'not recommended because of the likely confusion with blues previously assigned to other subjects'.⁴⁴ This alternative colour (and the ACE's opprobrium) was included until the 13th edition (1987) of *American Universities and Colleges* when it disappears, leaving drab as the only official colour for Business degrees today.

The sapphire blue alternative colour for degrees in Business was never officially authorized by the Intercollegiate Bureau of Academic Costume. But because the official degree colour of drab has remained unpopular, today many colleges and universities ignore both the ACE and the IBAC and continue to use sapphire blue instead of drab as the colour for Commerce, Accounting, and Business degrees, including Yale University, the University of Pennsylvania, and others.⁴⁵ Even so, the ACE was correct: sapphire blue is easily mistaken for the dark blue of Philosophy, the royal blue of Psychology (see below), or even the peacock blue of Public Administration.

39 G. P. Baker, 'The Spring Term', *The Harvard Graduates' Magazine*, 11.44 (June 1903), p. 542. See also 'Academic Costume', *The Harvard Graduates' Magazine*, 18.70 (December 1909), p. 293. Harvard no longer offers degrees in Agriculture.

40 See Hoppner, *Academic Costume in America*, p. 14.

41 Historically, music is another example of this institutional division of the creative arts into separate schools or colleges: most large universities have a School or College of Music and a School or College of Fine Arts. Accordingly, the IBAC assigned separate colours to Music (pink) and Fine Arts (brown).

42 The Academic Cap & Gown company is one of several firms creating hoods for Architecture degrees using blue-violet edging: <www.academicapparel.com/caps/regalia_colors.html> [retrieved 25 May 2021]. Confusingly, some manufacturers will use a violet colour for Architecture (similar if not identical to Dentistry's lilac) instead of blue-violet. See Fig. 7 for an example from Jostens.

43 For more information about the drab and sapphire blue degree colours for Commerce, Accounting, and Business, see Suit, 'The Iridescent Web', pp. 57–58.

44 Furniss, 'An Academic Costume Code', p. 1756. Also American Council on Education, 'An Academic Costume Code and an Academic Ceremony Guide', *American Universities and Colleges*, 12th edn (New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1983), p. 2069.

45 Harvard uses medium grey, the colour the Intercollegiate Bureau assigned to Veterinary Science.

Occupational Therapy: slate blue

Physical Therapy: teal

Audiology: spruce green

Criminal Justice: midnight blue

Psychology: royal blue

Interior Design: bilberry

On rare occasions, professional organizations were able to convince the Intercollegiate Bureau of Academic Costume to authorize an academic colour for degrees in their occupation. For example, the Society for the Promotion of Engineering Education selected orange as the degree colour for Engineering in 1905, a decision that was officially approved by the IBAC a year later.⁴⁶ Forty years later, the Association of Schools and Colleges of Optometry played a significant role in securing Bureau approval of seafoam green as the official degree colour for Optometry,⁴⁷ and in 1961 the American Home Economics Association requested a subject colour for degrees in Home Economics; the Intercollegiate Bureau and the American Council on Education assigned it maroon.⁴⁸

As the late twentieth century moved on the Intercollegiate Bureau of Academic Costume fell on hard times. Cotrell & Leonard, the ‘depository’ for the Bureau, had seen its share of the academic costume manufacturing market collapse in the 1960s. As their business waned, so did their influence on academic costume policy, and by 1970 the American Council on Education no longer included a representative from the IBAC on its Committee on Academic Costumes.⁴⁹ Labour problems at Cotrell & Leonard were followed by student boycotts of the firm at various east coast universities, which led to Cotrell & Leonard’s bankruptcy in 1980 and purchase by the rival E. R. Moore company that same year.

By 1987 the ACE had omitted reference to the Intercollegiate Bureau of Academic Costume from the historical prologue to the Academic Costume Code.⁵⁰ But the Bureau appears to have survived, at least in rump form, until 2011 at least, when it approved slate blue as an ‘alternate’ colour for degrees in Occupational Therapy.

In 1995, the American Occupational Therapy Association Commission on Education had declared slate blue as the official colour for the Master of Occupational Therapy (MOT) and Doctor of Occupational Therapy (OTD) degrees.⁵¹ The Association then petitioned the Intercollegiate Bureau of Academic Costume to approve this colour as the official faculty colour for occupational therapy, which it did—sixteen years later!—as an ‘alternate’ colour for occupational therapy (see Fig. 6). The Bureau approved slate blue as

46 Society for the Promotion of Engineering Education, Proceedings of the Thirteenth Annual Meeting [28 and 29 June 1905], 13 (1906), p. 5. Also Suit, ‘The Iridescent Web’, p. 61.

47 Hofstetter, ‘The Mysteries of Optometry’s Green,’ p. 72. Also Suit, *loc. cit.*

48 See the letter from Raymond F. Howes to O. J. Hoppner (7 April 1961) and the letter from Raymond F. Howes to A. June Bricker (20 April 1961), both in Hoover ACE. Also Suit, *loc. cit.*

49 ‘Committee on Academic Costumes’ (July 1970), Hoover, ACE, Box 602, Folder 8.

50 The last time the American Council on Education mentions the Bureau’s existence is in *American Universities and Colleges*, 12th edn (New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1983), p. 2069.

51 This topic had been discussed on the OT Connections forum, which was taken down on 29 June 2018 and replaced by a new forum called CommunOT. The content of the old OT Connections forum was deleted.

Intercollegiate Bureau of
Academic Costume
156 COLONIAL AVENUE ALBANY, NY 12208
TEL. 518-489-8170 FAX 518-43-9251
capandgown@iuc.com

September 26, 2011
Dr. Florence Clark, PhD, OTR/L
Assoc. Dean & Chair of the Division of Occupational Science and Occupational Therapy
President of the American Occupational Therapy Association
1540 Alcazar Street, CHP-133
Los Angeles, CA 90089-9003

Dear Dr. Clark,

Thank you very much for contacting the IBAC in hopes of registering slate blue as the official color for Occupational Therapy. Let me first lay out the process and the determinations based upon our research.

The general framework for the designation of academic colors originated in the 19th century in hopes of setting a standard that would be used and recognized throughout the United States.

This framework of academic colors was adopted by colleges and universities in the United States and continues to be followed by nearly all institutions of higher learning.

This voluntary standard only applies to the academic disciplines and the colors used in such standard are only broad classifications.

Since the 19th century, the number and variety of degrees has expanded greatly. In the 1990's, the IBAC determined that a moratorium would be placed on the adoption of new colors.


Instead, the general classification would continue to serve a model and would offer sufficient variety to cover specialized degrees.

As professional associations began to grow in prominence and as degrees began to become more specialized, various groups have requested an exemption from this moratorium.

When sufficient reason exists, an "alternate" color has been established. However, in doing so the following applies:

- The exemption is for an alternate color and does not replace another color that may already be in use at a higher institution
- Institutions voluntarily comply with the academic code. Institutions of higher learning are not "wrong" to use another color within their schema of hood colors.
- Colors that are being used to designate Occupational Therapy such as green (health related area) or gold (science) are valid options if an institution decides to use these colors.

With the above stipulations in place, we have registered slate blue as an alternate color for Occupational Therapy.

Sincerely yours,

John P. Harden, Esq.
President
Intercollegiate Bureau of Academic Costume

cc: Dr. Samia Rafeedie

Fig. 6. A 2011 letter from the Intercollegiate Bureau of Academic Costume regarding a suitable hood edging colour for degrees in Occupational Therapy. Courtesy Neil Harvison.

an 'alternate' option to, for instance, green (Medicine) or golden yellow (Science) that are 'official' colours in the Code.⁵²

Why slate blue? According to Neil Harvison, Chief Academic and Scientific Affairs Officer at the American Occupational Therapy Association:

Histories of occupational therapy credit the work of the reconstruction aides of World War One with providing impetus for the development of the profession. The reconstruction aides were civilian women appointed to provide therapy for World War One casualties in military hospitals. They were hired by the War Department but had no military standing. They did, however, have the opportunity to apply credit for service time in gaining civil service appointments after the war. In 1917, immediately after the war, the Society for Promotion of Occupational Therapy and the profession were formerly established. The Aides uniform was made of 'blue-grey' colored cloth. Slate blue was selected as it is 'blue-grey'.⁵³

Not wanting to be left behind and not wanting to use the same colour as Occupational Therapy, in 1997 the American Physical Therapy Association selected teal as its degree colour. A year before, the first students earning the newly created Doctor of Physical Therapy

⁵² Letter from John Hardin, Intercollegiate Bureau of Academic Costume, to Dr Florence Clark, President of the American Occupational Therapy Association, 26 September 2011.

⁵³ Email from Neil Harvison, Chief Academic and Scientific Affairs Officer at the American Occupational Therapy Association, 18 April 2014.

(DPT) degree had graduated from Creighton University wearing hoods edged with velvet in this blue-green colour. Faculty at Creighton and the University of Southern California (two of only a handful of DPT programmes at the time, including New York University and Slippery Rock University of Pennsylvania) had earlier begun a conversation with the Intercollegiate Bureau of Academic Costume regarding an appropriate colour for this degree, and teal was proposed as it fell within the green colour family of other medical and allied health subjects in the Code.⁵⁴ Teal was then selected as the official degree colour for Physical Therapy in November 1997 at the Board of Director's meeting of the American Physical Therapy Association.⁵⁵ Official recognition of this selection from the Intercollegiate Bureau does not seem to have been given.

In 2001, University of Louisville members of the National Association of Future Doctors of Audiology needed to order academic regalia for their upcoming Doctor of Audiology hooding ceremony.⁵⁶ This group of students then contacted one of the manufacturers of the apparel to determine options. No colours had been 'assigned' to audiology so the students undertook to petition for a colour unique to audiology. This was a student-driven effort, without the involvement of any professional association or group. The students did, however, coordinate with the students at the other universities that were offering the degree.

The students chose spruce green as the velvet edging colour of these hoods because it was a unique shade that harmonized with the other green colours of medical and allied health subjects in the 1960 Code.⁵⁷ It was first used at commencement ceremonies in the spring of 2001 at the University of Louisville and the Pennsylvania School of Optometry College of Audiology.⁵⁸

The Academy of Criminal Justice Sciences 'is an international association established in 1963 to foster professional and scholarly activities in the field of criminal justice. ACJS promotes criminal justice education, research, and policy analysis within the discipline of criminal justice for both educators and practitioners'.⁵⁹ The Academy authorized mid-night blue as its academic hood edging colour on 4 March 2002 because it 'symbolizes the following characteristics thought to represent the best in the field of criminal justice and criminology: trustworthiness, truthfulness, professionalism, intelligence, respectability,

54 From email correspondence with Deborah Givens, PT, PhD, DPT, Chair of the Department of Physical Therapy, Creighton University, 24 April 2014.

55 From email correspondence with Gini Blodgett Birchett, Lead Information Resources Specialist and Librarian, American Physical Therapy Association, 22 April 2014.

56 From email correspondence with Ian Windmill, PhD, University of Mississippi Medical Center, 28 June 2010. The National Association of Future Doctors of Audiology became the Student Academy of Audiology in 2009.

57 See these notes from a 2003 lecture by Dr George S. Osborne, Dean of the School of Audiology at the Pennsylvania College of Optometry: <www.audiologyonline.com/articles/pf_article_detail.asp?article_id=505> [retrieved 25 May 2021]. See also Veronica Heide, 'Mission Accomplished!' *Audiology Practices*, 2:2 (June 2010), p. 35.

58 See <http://web.archive.org/web/20190502120518/http://www.audible-difference.com/Articles/veronica_h_aud_degree.htm> [retrieved 25 May 2021] and point 5 at <www.audiologyonline.com/news/news_detail.asp?news_id=213> [retrieved 25 May 2021].

59 'About ACJS,' at <www.acjs.org/page/AboutACJS> [retrieved 25 May 2021].

THE BRISTOL PACKAGE

Example shown Doctor of Education (EDD) - light blue velvet and gold cord and button



GOWN DETAILS

- Revive sustainable black fabric gown
- Classic yoke with fluting on shoulders and back
- Decorative cord and button on back yoke
- Velvet chevrons and front panels
- Concealed center zipper
- Cuffs with Velcro adjustment
- Left pocket

VELVET COLOR ON GOWN ■
Back only

HOOD DETAILS

- Revive sustainable black fabric
- Degree color velvet
- Satin lining in school colors
- Cord and button
- Hood attachment cord

TAM DETAILS

- Black velvet
- Classic 6 sided
- Gold silky tassel



INCLUDED WITH PURCHASE

- Garment bag and wooden hanger

DEGREE VELVET COLORS*

Education	PhD Philosophy
Agriculture	Architecture
Law, Letters, Humanities	Chemistry, Architecture, Business
Nursing	Economics
Engineering	Fine Arts, including Landscape Architecture
Forestry	Journalism, Home Ec.
Law, Criminal Justice	Liberal Science
Medicine	Music
Marketing	Occupational Therapy
Oratory (Speech)	Religious
Physical Education	Physical Therapy
Public Administration, Public Management	Public Health
Science	Social Work
Theology	Veterinary Science, Chiropractic

*Color shades may vary from finished product.

Courtesy Jostens

Fig. 7. A page from a 2017 brochure from Jostens, one of the major manufacturers of academic costume in the US today. Surprisingly, the chart on the right is a listing of 'degree colors' (1895 Code) and not 'subject colors' (1960 Code). The chart also exhibits some oddities and several new colours (some of which have been discussed in this article): Architecture and Landscape Architecture are listed separately with different colours; Journalism and Home Economics are listed together with the same colour; Chiropractic is listed here with Veterinary Science grey, not Oratory/Speech silver or something new; and separate colours are cited for Occupational Therapy, 'PhD Philosophy', Physical Therapy, as well as something called 'Liberal Science' (!), which seems to use the cream colour of Social Science. The chart concludes with a cautionary disclaimer: 'Color shades may vary from finished product.' For the complete brochure, see www.jostens.com/apps/shop/images/pdf/FineQualityRegalia_TrifoldBrochure.pdf.

security, and dignity'.⁶⁰ It is probably not coincidental that police uniforms in the United States are traditionally dark blue.

In 2007 the National Council of Schools and Programs of Professional Psychology adopted royal blue as the official colour for the Doctor of Psychology degree. Goldenrod and rose had also been proposed but were not chosen.⁶¹ Historically, royal blue was a dark blue with a purple tint, but today royal blue is typically defined as a mid-range blue with a purple tint. To avoid confusion with the dark blue velvet trim of the PhD hood, the PsyD hood is sometimes edged with royal blue velvet of this lighter (or modern) variation.

In 2009 the Fellows of the Interior Design Educators Council selected bilberry (a 'deep eggplant purple') as the hood edging colour for degrees in Interior Design, to be 'separate and distinct from architecture and the other design professions'.⁶² This colour was chosen with the help of Academic Cap and Gown, a judicial and academic regalia company founded in 1946 in Chatsworth, California.⁶³

These six new degree and subject colours have been selected or approved by professional and academic organizations to be used by graduates of college and university programmes accredited by those organizations. Thus these academic colours have a serious claim to legitimacy, even though most of the colours have not been officially authorized by the Intercollegiate Bureau of Academic Costume or the American Council on Education. Having said that, there are several arguments that can be mustered against the use of these colours. First of all, most of these new degree or subject colours are too similar in shade to authorized colours already in the official IBAC and ACE lists, which makes these new colours difficult to distinguish from other degree or subject colours at a commencement. Further, the separate colours for Occupational Therapy, Physical Therapy, and Audiology illustrate the unfortunate tendency—a tendency that is now more than a century old in American academia—for similar vocational degrees to create separate professional doctoral degree titles and then demand separate degree colours. The precedent of the 1895 Code would be to combine these narrowly defined vocational degrees under a single faculty colour assigned to Therapeutic Medicine, Allied Health Professions, or something of that sort.

Epilogue: Heirloom seeds for a healthy crop

It is long past time for a reform of the American faculty colour system. For the past sixty years the American Council on Education has shown little interest in maintaining the integrity of the subject colour regulations it published in the 1960 Academic Costume Code—

60 From email correspondence with Cathy Barth, Manager, Academy of Criminal Justice Science, 21 May 2014.

61 From a 2007 news bulletin that was once archived online but no longer exists. Perhaps unaware of this decision by the NCSPPP, today a few colleges and universities use gold as the subject colour for Psychology, which obviously leads to confusion with the golden yellow of Science. The University of Minnesota Duluth is one example, and the Academic Cap & Gown company tailors psychology hoods with gold-coloured velvet edging: <www.academicapparel.com/caps/regalia_colors.html> [retrieved 25 May 2021].

62 From a 2010 news bulletin that was once online but the page no longer exists.

63 The report was once online but the page no longer exists. Academic Cap and Gown is online at <www.academicapparel.com/> [retrieved 25 May 2021].

regulations it would permanently cement before the end of that decade in its moratorium on new colours. The Intercollegiate Bureau of Academic Costume, having abandoned the degree colour framework of its 1895 Intercollegiate Code of Academic Costume, published nothing after the mid-1960s as its representatives became increasingly adverse to correspondence. Even today, letters can be sent and phone calls can be made to the Bureau, but they are rarely answered,⁶⁴ and its former website is a dead link (see Fig. 6). Apparently, as of 2021 the IBAC no longer exists.

Since the support of the ACE or IBAC cannot be counted upon, perhaps the best strategy to combat the entropy of American faculty colours today is to educate consumers, who are the ones ultimately holding the most power in this situation. A purchaser of academic regalia who has been well educated in these matters is a purchaser who can demand a better product from academic costume manufacturers. Likewise, faculty who have been well educated in the history of academic dress can make sure the proper hood edging colours are being purchased by their school for their graduates.

But with two competing and incompatible faculty colour systems being used today—the ‘degree color’ approach of the 1895 Intercollegiate Code and the ‘subject color’ approach of the 1960 Academic Costume Code—which is the best? Or is there another system that is better?

From time to time, academic costume historians have proposed reforms to the current systems. In his seminal 1962 book *Academic Heraldry in America*, Kevin Sheard recommended an expansion of the heraldic patterns used in the linings of American hoods; George Schweitzer devoted one of the appendices in *The Doctorate* (1965) to ‘Degree, Subject Color, and Academic Regalia Reform’; in 1985 Mark Strickland and John Fluitt proposed stricter adherence to the 1960 Academic Costume Code and an increase in the number of subject colours to avoid ‘Academic Confusion’; David Boven suggested that American academic costume needed more variety in his 2009 examination of ‘American Universities’ Departure from the Academic Costume Code’; and in 2011 Stephen L. Wolgast presented a ‘Manifesto for Change’ in an article on American subject colours.⁶⁵ Sadly, none of these reform proposals have borne fruit.

But it’s hard to resist the fatalistic temptation to toss another reform proposal into the abyss. So as a way to popularize the research I’ve done for the three articles I’ve now written on American academic colours for the *Transactions of the Burgon Society*, as a way to better educate academic costume consumers about the history of academic regalia

64 This is from personal experience; however, the Bureau’s poor communication skills are legendary: see, for example, comments by S. Mark Strickland and John L. Fluitt, ‘Academic Colors ... Academic Confusion’, *College and University: The Journal of the American Association of Collegiate Registrars*, 61.1 (1985), p. 30; Hofstetter, ‘The Mysteries of Optometry’s Green’, p. 72; and Robert Armagost, ‘University Uniforms: The Standardization of Academic Dress in the United States’, *TBS*, 9 (2009), p. 145, <https://doi.org/10.4148/2475-7799.1074>. The last known documented action by the Bureau was in 2011, when an ‘alternate’ colour for occupational therapy was approved (see Fig. 6).

65 See Sheard, pp. 1–6; Schweitzer, pp. 100–03; Strickland and Fluitt, pp. 30–31; David T. Boven, ‘American Universities’ Departure from the Academic Costume Code’, *TBS*, 9 (2009), pp. 169–71, <https://doi.org/10.4148/2475-7799.1075>; and Wolgast, ‘The Demise of “Faculty” Meanings in U.S. Hoods and a Manifesto for Change’, *TBS*, 11 (2011), pp. 76–90, <https://doi.org/10.4148/2475-7799.1093>.

in the US and to be more responsive to their questions and needs, and as a way to create a new organization designed to promote the standardized use of academic costume in the US, in 2018 I created the Intercollegiate Registry of Academic Costume as an homage to the apparently defunct Intercollegiate Bureau of Academic Costume. I also began to create a website that summarizes the published work others have done on the history of American academic costume and the research I've done on the history of the degree and subject colours used on the velvet trim on American academic hoods and gowns as well as the unpublished research I've done on the collegiate colours and heraldic patterns used in the silk or satin linings of American academic hoods. My hope is that the Intercollegiate Registry website can be an up-to-date and easily accessed location where people curious about American academic costume can go for useful information about this topic.⁶⁶

So in this epilogue to my final article on American subject and degree colours, I would like to suggest what I think is a good way to correct the confused state of our academic colour systems in the US.

It seems to me that any reform of the American subject and degree colour systems must first address these two basic problems:

1. It is impossible to assign a distinctive colour to every academic subject or major. There are too many academic subjects or majors today.
2. It is impossible to assign a distinctive colour to every academic degree title. There are too many academic degree titles today.

The obvious solution to these problems is that some manner of 'clustering' must be used, regardless of whether one uses a subject colour approach or a degree colour approach. We cannot have individual subject colours for the broad categories of science like biology, physics, chemistry, mathematics, and so on, much less a collection of individual subject colours for specializations of those subdivisions of science like molecular biology, zoology, biotechnology, anatomy, botany, and so on. Either way, we would run out of distinguishable hood edging colours long before we even came close to finishing the natural sciences and moved to the social sciences, the liberal arts, the creative arts, or any of the professions. We need a subject or degree colour for the broadly defined category of 'Science' that would include all of these sub-disciplines.

But which sub-disciplines should be included in Science and which should not? How should we delineate the edges of other subject or degree colour clusters? Where should we draw the circles? Which stars should be in our constellations?

Here I think we should look at the academic structures of our universities and recognize that the administrators of our institutions of higher education have already done this clustering work for us, which means that we need to once again think in terms of *faculty* colours.

American universities are divided into colleges, schools, and departments. Pedagogically, these departments are further subdivided into the major subjects that are taught. Clearly we cannot assign colours to each of the major subjects in an academic department (*contra* the 1960 Code) because there are too many of these major subjects. But because these academic departments have been grouped into a limited number of larger colleges and schools, we can certainly assign distinct colours to most of these 'faculties' (colleges and schools), which can then be used to corral similar degree titles (as in the 1895 Code).

⁶⁶ At <<http://intercollegiate-registry.org/>>.

Most American degree titles are based upon the names of the colleges and schools that confer them. Look, for instance, at the eight degree colours initially authorized by the 1895 Code. All of these colours represented a degree title conferred by a college or school that usually had a similar name:

- White**, which represented a Bachelor, Master, or Doctor of **Arts** or Letters from a College of **Arts** and Sciences.
- Scarlet**, which represented a Bachelor, Master, or Doctor of Divinity or **Theology** from a College or School of **Theology**, from a Divinity School, or from a Seminary.
- Dark brown**, which represented a Bachelor or Master of **Fine Arts** from a College or School of **Fine Arts**.
- Purple**, which represented a Bachelor, Master, or Doctor of **Law** from a College or School of **Law**.
- Green**, which represented a Doctor of **Medicine** from a College or School of **Medicine**.
- Pink**, which represented a Bachelor, Master, or Doctor of **Music** from a College or School of **Music**.
- Golden yellow**, which represented a Bachelor, Master, or Doctor of **Science** from a College of Arts and **Sciences**.
- Dark blue**, which represented a Bachelor, Master, or Doctor of **Philosophy** degree from a College of Arts (historically: **Philosophy**) and Sciences (historically: Natural **Philosophy**).

Today’s universities are hardly different. If one looks at the academic colleges and schools of the major American institutions of higher education, one sees that there is a remarkable consistency in the way these various institutions are logistically subdividing themselves into constellations of related pedagogical subjects and majors. The names of these colleges and schools may vary a little—‘College of Agricultural and Environmental Sciences’ or ‘College of Agriculture, Food, and Natural Resources’ or ‘School of Forestry and Environmental Studies’—but the cluster of subjects they encompass in what we might call ‘Natural Resources and Environmental Sciences’ is very similar. I believe these clusters of academic faculties (colleges and schools) should guide us in a revision of the degree colour system of the 1895 Intercollegiate Code.

A compilation of the academic units of the Association of American Universities is a good place to start. Founded in 1900, the AAU is a consortium of sixty-two of the most influential research universities in the United States and Canada.⁶⁷ When lists of the colleges and schools within each of these institutions are compiled, a surprisingly manageable number of shared pedagogical divisions appears:

Arts and Sciences, Liberal Arts, Humanities, or Science	62 universities
Business, Business Administration, Management, Accounting, Business and Economics, or Commerce	61 universities
Engineering, Engineering and Applied Science, Engineering and Computer Science, or Technology	53 universities
Law	47 universities
Medicine	47 universities
Education	42 universities
Nursing	35 universities
Public Health	25 universities
Social Work, Social Welfare, or Social Service	22 universities

⁶⁷ At <www.aau.edu/> [retrieved 25 May 2021].

All of these large college or school divisions already have degree colours the Intercollegiate Bureau of Academic Costume created a century ago.

Other large pedagogical clusters of related subjects also exist, but have not yet collectively agreed upon a shared umbrella term for their disciplines. For example, twenty-five AAU members have a large pedagogical division devoted to the study of government and the political sciences, but these colleges and schools are identified by a variety of names: Government, Public Affairs, Public Policy, Public Service, International Affairs, International Studies, Leadership, Social Policy, and so on. Perhaps this cluster of related governmental academic subjects will eventually develop a singular term to describe itself, but in the meantime, we may propose a descriptive term for it (I chose 'Government and Political Sciences') and assign it a faculty colour based upon traditional American degree colours authorized by the Intercollegiate Bureau of Academic Costume or other organizations (I chose royal blue). Other AAU colleges and schools without a shared disciplinary vocabulary or degree colour could be treated in a similar way.

As a specific example, we can compare and contrast the large academic units of two universities randomly selected from the list of AAU members: Boston University (a private, historically Methodist university) and the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill (a public, state-funded university).

Boston University	University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill
College of Arts and Sciences	College of Arts and Sciences
School of Business	School of Business
College of Communication	School of Journalism and Media
School of Dental Medicine	School of Dentistry
College of Education	School of Education
College of Engineering	
College of Fine Arts	
School of Global Studies	School of Government
College of Health and Rehabilitation Sciences	
School of Hospitality Administration	
	School of Information and Library Science
School of Law	School of Law
School of Medicine	School of Medicine
	School of Nursing
	School of Pharmacy
School of Public Health	School of Global Public Health
School of Social Work	School of Social Work
School of Theology	

These are two universities with different histories, geographic locations, emphases, and missions, but nonetheless they share many of the same academic divisions. That said, even the differences in their academic divisions are instructive. UNC Chapel Hill has a School of Nursing, but Boston University does not. Boston *used* to have a School of Nursing, however. It opened in 1946 and closed in 1988 due to declining enrolment and competition from subsidized nursing programmes at state universities. So even though Boston no longer has

Allied Health and Rehabilitation Sciences	slate blue
Alternative Medicine	cerise
Architecture and Design	blue-violet
Arts and Letters	white
Behavioral and Social Sciences	cream
Business and Management	copper
Communication and Media	silver
Dentistry	lilac
Education	light blue
Engineering and Applied Science	orange
Fine Arts	bistre
Government and Political Sciences	royal blue
Honorary Degrees	black
Information Sciences	bright yellow
Law	purple
Medicine	green
Music	pink
Natural Resources and Environmental Sciences	golden brown
Nursing	apricot
Optometry	seafoam
Pharmacy	dark olive green
Philosophy	dark blue
Podiatry	Nile green
Public Health	salmon pink
Science	golden yellow
Social Work	rose
Theology	scarlet
Veterinary Medicine	dark grey

Fig. 8. Categories of the most common academic colleges and schools among members of the Association of American Universities with degree colours derived from the Intercollegiate Bureau of Academic Costume and other traditional sources.

a nursing school, there is no shortage of Colleges or Schools of Nursing among other AAU members.

Likewise, Boston has a College of Engineering but UNC Chapel Hill does not. This is because UNC Chapel Hill was founded as a state liberal arts university in 1789. But in 1887, North Carolina created North Carolina State University as a land-grant college emphasizing technical and industrial education, including engineering. So there has been no need for UNC Chapel Hill to create another state engineering programme, and there is no shortage of Colleges or Schools of Engineering among other AAU members.

Looking at both columns, we can see that *most* of Boston and UNC's colleges and schools already have colours historically authorized by the Intercollegiate Bureau of Academic Costume. So if we make sure we do not lose sight of the forest because of the large

number of trees, the astonishing thing to notice is that, taken as a whole, the sixty-two members of the Association of American Universities share a huge number of the same college and school divisions—Engineering, Business, Law, Science, Fine Arts, Nursing, Education, Social Work, Music, Theology, Medicine, and so on—divisions that already have Intercollegiate Bureau degree colours assigned to them.

The colours assigned to these groups of colleges and schools could be used for the degree titles associated with those faculties, which would help us avoid colours for the narrowly defined and/or uncommon degrees that have consistently hamstrung the two American academic colour systems, like bachelor, master, or doctoral degrees in humanics, physical education, home economics, physical therapy, occupational therapy, audiology, and so on.⁶⁸

Traditionally, the colours assigned to the large pedagogical divisions I am describing would be considered *faculty* colours. But employing the *degree* colour approach of the 1895 Intercollegiate Code of Academic Costume has one very attractive benefit. As I mentioned earlier, the American academic system distinguishes between liberal arts (or research) degrees and professional (or technical) degrees, and typically only a handful of degree titles are used for the former. The Master of Arts, Master of Science, and Doctor of Philosophy degrees are most often used to designate a liberal arts or research degree. Professional degrees typically use the name of the subject as part of the degree: Master of Agriculture, Doctor of Medicine, Doctor of Occupational Therapy, etc.⁶⁹

Among terminal research degrees, the PhD is dominant. And professors are very conscious of the honour attached to this degree. The degree colour system of the 1895 Code preserves this dichotomy between (and hierarchy of) liberal arts/research degrees and professional/technical degrees in a way the subject colour system of the 1960 Code and the traditional faculty colour system cannot.

So in my opinion, the degree colour system of the 1895 Intercollegiate Code of Academic Costume—as *originally applied to clusters of degrees*—is the best solution to the problems we see in American academic hood edging today. Because this system would

68 In situations like these, it would not be a doctoral degree in Audiology I object to. Rather, it would be a ‘Doctor of Audiology’ degree I object to, when a shared doctoral degree title like ‘Doctor of Allied Health Sciences’ or ‘Doctor of Rehabilitation Sciences’ could instead be used to describe a cluster of related doctoral programmes. One could then receive a Doctor of Allied Health Sciences degree with a concentration in audiology, or physical therapy, or occupational therapy in the same way one receives a Doctor of Philosophy degree with a concentration in biology, or chemistry, or physics. My complaint here is primarily one of pedagogical terminology, not of academic costume, although they are related. The use of standardized degree titles has been debated for over a century in the US; for a specific example, see an interesting discussion in 1903 by the American Society of Naturalists about appropriate degree titles for coursework in the sciences, recorded in *Science*, 19.491 (27 May 1904), pp. 809–21.

69 Here I must admit that on rare occasions this rule of thumb is not always so neat: a student interested in practising law would earn a Juris Doctor (or Doctor of Jurisprudence) (JD), but a student interested in the history of law can earn *either* a Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) in law or a Doctor of Juridical Science degree (SJD). The PhD and SJD are terminal degrees; the JD is not. The nomenclature of law degrees is atypical for historical reasons I will not go into here, but it is worth emphasizing that most professions have but one terminal research degree: the PhD.

Doctor of Acupuncture and Oriental Medicine (DAOM)		cerise
Doctor of Arts (DA)		white
Doctor of Audiology (AuD)		slate blue
Doctor of Chiropractic (DC)		cerise
Doctor of Dental Surgery (DDS)		lilac
Doctor of Education (EdD)		light blue
Doctor of Engineering (DEng)		orange
Master of Fine Arts (MFA)		bistre
Doctor of Hebrew Literature (DHL)		white
Doctor of Juridical Science (SJD)		purple
Doctor of Library Science (LSD)		bright yellow
Doctor of Medicine (MD)		green
Doctor of Ministry (DMin)		scarlet
Doctor of Musical Arts (DMA)		pink
Doctor of Nursing Practice (DNP)		apricot
Doctor of Occupational Therapy (OTD)		slate blue
Doctor of Optometry (OD)		seafoam
Doctor of Osteopathic Medicine (DO)		green
Doctor of Pharmacy (PharmD)		dark olive green
Doctor of Philosophy (PhD)		dark blue
Doctor of Physical Therapy (DPT)		slate blue
Doctor of Podiatric Medicine (DPM)		Nile green
Doctor of Psychology (PsyD)		cream
Doctor of Public Administration (DPA)		royal blue
Doctor of Public Health (DPH)		salmon pink
Doctor of Sacred Music (SMD)		pink
Doctor of the Science of Law (JSD)		purple
Doctor of Social Science (DSSc)		cream
Doctor of Social Welfare (DSW)		rose
Doctor of Theology (ThD)		scarlet
Doctor of Veterinary Medicine (DVM)		dark grey

Fig. 9. A list of currently conferred terminal degree titles and abbreviations authorized by the Regents of the University of the State of New York married to the degree colours proposed in this epilogue. This list includes research and professional degrees. Note that the Regents have not authorized Doctor of Architecture and Doctor of Business Administration degrees for New York institutions of higher education, but these terminal professional degrees are conferred by other universities in the United States. The colours for the DArch and DBA would be blue-violet and copper, respectively.

assign a single colour to a constellation of related academic faculties using contemporary college and school divisions as a guide, you may call this a ‘faculty color’ system if you wish, but it is still essentially a ‘degree color’ system that *suggests* (but not necessarily *indicates*) the *title* of the wearer’s degree, with similar degree titles clustered into faculty colour categories assigned to the academic fields of the most common colleges or schools in American universities. Tagged degree titles would follow the customary Intercollegiate Bureau system whereby the degree colour is determined by the faculty in the title, not the subject or major tagged to the faculty, so all Master of Arts degrees regardless of tag would use white and all Master of Science degrees regardless of tag would use golden yellow. This proposal is an heirloom of the 1895 Intercollegiate Code, preserving what I think are the best qualities of that system, gently limited and restrained by the natural pedagogical divisions of contemporary academia.

As you may recall, in 1903 the Regents of the University of the State of New York charged the Intercollegiate Bureau of Academic Costume with the responsibility to assign new degree colours to degrees authorized by that state, which explains why the Bureau approved certain degree colours at certain times during its history. Today, the Regents of the University of the State New York continue to limit the number of degree titles and degree abbreviations colleges and universities may confer in that state.⁷⁰ To illustrate how my proposed reform of American degree colours would work, in Figure 9 I have applied the twenty-eight degree colours shown in Figure 8 to current terminal research and professional degrees approved by the Regents and conferred by New York institutions of higher education. Keep in mind that some of these degrees are extremely obscure, only offered at perhaps one university in the state. Not shown are honorary degrees; according to my proposed system all hoods for honorary degrees would be edged with black velvet.

This proposed revision of the degree colour system of the 1895 Intercollegiate Code is conservative, not radical. It improves the system already being used by most colleges and universities in the US, and it possesses at least five advantages over the 1960 Academic Costume Code used by the rest. First, this revised degree colour system preserves the distinction between research and professional degrees. Second, there are fewer degree colours to memorize. Third, fewer of these colours are so similar in hue as to be easily confused. Fourth, a greater percentage of these colours have symbolic associations with the disciplines they represent. And fifth, a broader spectrum of academic disciplines can claim a representative colour of their own. Taken as a whole, then, these advantages permit one to ‘read’ a hood with a greater amount of specificity than the 1960 Academic Costume Code while avoiding the confusing excess of degree colours in the 1895 Intercollegiate Code of Academic Costume.

ERRATUM:

An error on page 58 of Kenneth L. Suit, ‘The Iridescent Web: American Degree Colours (1895–1935),’ *Transactions of the Burgon Society*, 15 (2015), resulted in the deletion

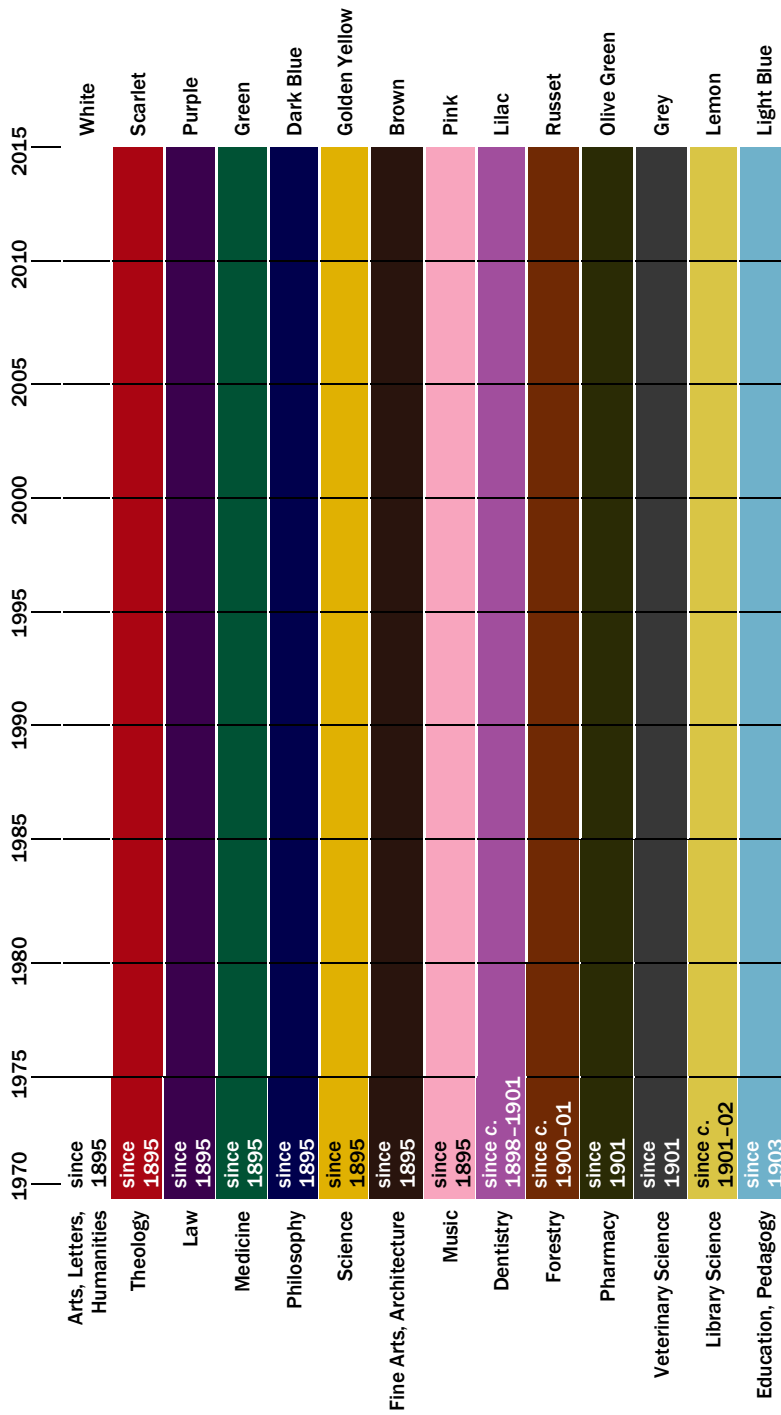
⁷⁰ The current list of registered degrees for New York colleges and universities (Section 3.50) can be accessed from a link on this page: <www.nysed.gov/college-university-evaluation/education-law-rules-and-regulations> [retrieved 25 May 2021].

of information about Forestry, here in italics: 'But catalogues from Cotrell & Leonard (the depository of the records of the Intercollegiate Bureau) and other contemporary sources indicate that Dentistry was added between 1898 and 1901 *and Forestry was added in 1900 or 1901 ...*.' The source for Forestry is the same as that cited in Vol. 15 for Dentistry: 'School Equipment: Graduation Gowns', *The School Journal*, 62.22 (1 June 1901), p. 603.

Appendix A

Approximate "Degree Color" Adoption Dates By The Intercollegiate Bureau Of Academic Costume (1970 - Present)

Whenever possible, the colour shades in this chart have been closely matched to the velvet edgings of vintage Cotrell & Leonard hoods, although there are often slight differences in the same hue due to dye variations and age fading of the fabric. Not shown are five degree colours either officially authorized or considered for official authorization that were deleted during the tumultuous 1959-1960 period: Humanities (crimson), Naprapathy (cerise), Philanthropy (rose), Political Science (royal blue), and Retailing (turquoise). For more on this subject see Suit, 'Conforming to the Established Standards'.



Commerce, Accountancy, Bus.	since c. 1903-05																			Drab
Engineering	since c. 1906-09																			Orange
Oratory (Speech)	since c. 1906-09																			Silver Grey
Agriculture	since c. 1909-15																			Maize
Physical Education	since c. 1912-15																			Sage Green
Economics	since c. 1912-15																			Copper
Public Health	since c. 1915-18																			Salmon Pink
Podiatry-Chiroprody	since c. 1936																			Nile Green
Nursing	since c. 1936-37																			Apricot
Social Work	since c. 1936-37																			Citron
Optometry	since c. 1949																			Sea Foam
Public Administration, Foreign Service	since 1959																			Peacock Blue
Journalism	since 1959																			Crimson
Social Science	since c. 1959-60																			Cream
Home Economics	since 1961																			Maroon
Occupational Therapy																				Slate Blue
Physical Therapy																				Teal
Audiology																				Spruce Green
Criminal Justice																				Midnight Blue
Psychology																				Royal Blue ⁶
Interior Design																				Bilberry

1 In 1995 the American Occupational Therapy Association selected 'slate blue' as the degree colour for Occupational Therapy. This was approved as an 'alternate' colour for Occupational Therapy by the Intercollegiate Bureau in 2011.

2 In 1997 the American Physical Therapy Association selected 'teal' as the degree colour for Physical Therapy. It is not known whether this colour was approved by the Intercollegiate Bureau.

3 In 2001 the National Association of Future Doctors of Audiology selected 'spruce green' as the degree colour for Audiology. It is not known whether this colour was approved by the Intercollegiate Bureau.

4 In 2002 the Academy of Criminal Justice Sciences autho-

rized 'midnight blue' as the degree colour for Criminal Justice. It is not known whether this colour was approved by the Intercollegiate Bureau.

5 In 2007 the National Council of Schools and Programs of Professional Psychology selected 'royal blue' as the degree colour for Psychology. It is not known whether this colour was approved by the Intercollegiate Bureau.

6 Sometimes a lighter shade of royal blue is used to avoid confusion with the dark blue of Philosophy.

7 In 2009 the Fellows of the Interior Design Educators Council selected 'bilberry' as the degree colour for Interior Design. It is not known whether this colour was approved by the Intercollegiate Bureau.

Appendix B

'Subject Color' Adoption Dates by the American Council on Education (1970–Present)

To illustrate the difference between the darker degree color shades the IBAC and Cotrell & Leonard used (see Appendix A) and the brighter degree color shades typically used by academic costume manufacturers today, in this chart I have used the 'faculty color' hues shown in Wikipedia, at <en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Academic_regalia_in_the_United_States> [retrieved 12 July 2021]. Some variation within a given degree color may be expected, even on vintage hoods. But generally speaking, academic costume manufacturers today use degree colors that are much brighter and more vivid than the colors Cotrell & Leonard used a century ago, which makes it easier to distinguish among most of the degree colors but gives a more aesthetically lurid appearance to the garments.

