

## The Demise of ‘Faculty’ Meanings in U.S. Hoods and a Manifesto for Change

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### Abstract

US faculty colours are applied inconsistently, explained confusingly, and are out of date. In arguing that the colour scheme of the Code should be revised, this paper traces the changes to the description of colour use since 1895. It highlights sources of misunderstanding, including terminology and the way in which the original ‘faculties’ were chosen. Motivations for changing colour assignments from ‘subject-specific’ to ‘degree-specific’ lead to a review of the multiple interpretations of the national scheme. Influences from outside the Code are discussed before concluding with a manifesto for change.<sup>1</sup>

The American hood, once described as ‘something fearfully and wonderfully made’, barely lives up to that praise any more.<sup>2</sup> Conceived in 1895 to tell three pieces of information—the level of its wearer’s degree, the university that conferred it, and what the wearer studied—the hood today reliably informs the viewer only which degree the wearer holds: bachelor, master or doctor. Even at that, one needs a ruler to tell the difference between the bachelor’s and master’s hood.

In the lining we see the colours or colour of the university that granted the degree, a specification from the original version of the Intercollegiate Code of Academic Costume. Its design scheme once worked but now fails. Although one could create a scheme in which a recognizable lining existed for each of the four thousand five hundred colleges and universities in the US, the idea has not caught on.<sup>3</sup> Without re-imagining the way the lining identifies a university, the lining will never serve its intended purpose again.

The third piece of the hood’s information also needs reform. In 1895 the Code listed eight colours, each to be ‘... distinctive of the faculty to which the degree pertains’.<sup>4</sup> The

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1 The author thanks Bruce Christianson and Alex Kerr for their suggestions, direction and patience as they read early drafts of this paper.

2 Letter from William H. Carpenter, provost of Columbia University, to Hugh Birckhead, 6 May 1913; Central Files; Box 33, Folder 2: Commencement; University Archives; Columbia University in the City of New York.

3 A double chevron (dividing the hood into three fields) would require a palate of only 17 colours. ( $17 \times 17 \times 17 \times 17 = 4,913$ ). Split the hood lining into four quarters and nine colours would suffice. Thanks to Prof. Christianson for doing the arithmetic.

4 Printed in the Minutes of the Trustees [of Columbia College], vol. XV (3 June 1895), p. 174,

list increased to seventeen by 1911 and to twenty-five in 1960, when it stopped growing. Academic growth continued, however, leaving modern subjects to fit poorly into the mid-century framework.

Another reason for reform is the confusion over the way the Code intends US graduates to select the colour that represents their academic studies: is the colour based on the title of the degree (Arts for a BA, say)? Or was the idea to identify the subject the student studied? The degree-or-subject question had an unclear answer from the Code's beginning, and since then has been used both ways, sometimes referring to the title of the degree (for example, arts, science or philosophy) and sometimes to the subject studied leading to the degree (such as education for a Bachelor of Arts in education and agriculture for a Master of Science in agriculture).

This paper will argue that the Code originally intended to refer to broad areas of study but was read to refer to degree names. After it started being seen as a subject-specific list, the Code was re-written to follow that practice. The result is a confusion of mismatched subjects and poorly written advice. This paper also presents a manifesto for change in its conclusion.

A note on the object of discussion. The standard American hood is of the Wales simple shape [s5] with a split-salmon cut for bachelors and masters and the same for doctors but with 'panels' attached to the cowl to make it look like a full hood. Its shell is black, and it varies in length from three feet (bachelors) to three-and-one-half feet (masters) to four feet (doctors). Few bachelors ever wear hoods because most universities omit them from their ceremonies.

### **The Code's changes in description of colour use**

Since its introduction in 1895, the Code changed in its guideline on how colours pertained to their faculties four times, by my count. In brief, here are the ways the Code has specified faculty colour:

**1895 DEGREE** '... distinctive of the faculty to which the degree pertains.'

**1932 DEGREE OR SUBJECT** The 'Faculty or subject to which the degree pertains'.

**1960 SUBJECT** '... distinctive of the subject to which the degree pertains', i.e. 'the degree of Master of Science in Agriculture should be maize, representing agriculture, rather than golden yellow, representing science.'

**1973 SUBJECT OR DEGREE** The same as 1960 but also in a different section: '... white if [the degree is] awarded in arts, golden yellow if in science'. The contradiction would remain in print in two editions over fourteen years. We can assume the contradiction was an error, but whether the intention was to keep or to change the faculty colour's reference to the subject, the result was that both uses were correct. What the Code refers to as 'interdisciplinary doctorates', including the PhD, took the subject colour: 'the principal field under which the degree is awarded'.

**1987 SUBJECT, EXCEPT FOR THE PHD** For all other degrees, the Code returns to the 1960 example. For the PhD, 'the dark blue color is used to represent mastery of the discipline of learning and scholarship in any field ... and is not intended to represent the field of

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University Archives, Columbia University in the City of New York. It is described in the minutes as 'a statute [that] had been prepared and had been adopted by Yale and [that] was to be adopted by Johns Hopkins, Princeton and other colleges ...'

philosophy’.<sup>5</sup> Note that dark blue is not required for the PhD, but that it only ‘represent[s] ... the discipline of learning ... in any field’. Someone earning a PhD in engineering could wear orange just as permissibly as dark blue.

With so many changes, we can see why the Code has become a tangle of interpretations and outcomes. Next we will start from the beginning in an attempt to understand the reasons behind some of the changes.

### **1895: ‘Distinctive of the faculty ...’**

When the Intercollegiate Code of Academic Costume was adopted in 1895, the text called for each colour to be distinctive of a faculty.

What, then, is a faculty? If a degree ‘pertains’ to it, then I suggest that a faculty was meant to be the organizational unit that oversees a specific degree or degrees. In that sense, a faculty is a group of instructors organized around an academic subject, such as Arts and Letters, with specialists in history, the classics and so on. A typical university in the US has several faculties, each put into a unit often called a college and under the supervision of a dean. A university may have a college of engineering, a college of arts, a school of law and a college of fine arts (among others), each with its own faculty.

If for the sake of argument we accept this approach, then we would expect that faculty colours refer to the title of the degree, rather than to the subject studied. So when one of the eight faculties in the original scheme awarded a degree, the hood’s colour was based on the faculty rather than the specific field of the graduate: arts and letters, fine arts, law, medicine, music, philosophy, theology and science. With this explanation, in the late 1890s if you had studied music but your diploma identified you as a Bachelor of Arts, you would have worn white for arts and letters, according to this line of thought.

That understanding of a faculty, however, excludes degrees awarded at the time in engineering and divinity. There could not have been a reason to exclude from the list of colours neither a Doctor of Divinity nor a Metallurgical Engineer (MetE), a point we will discuss shortly.

The PhD, which was and is still awarded in all subjects, remains something of a mystery. What was the intention of the Code regarding its use of philosophy’s colour, dark blue? One answer is that dark blue pertained to the study of the discipline of philosophy itself, just as green pertained to the study of medicine. In this example, someone studying, perhaps, the applications of medicine during the Plague, who may have been under the instruction of a professor of history, would have completed his degree within arts and letters and so would wear white instead of green. This suggestion works acceptably when the degree conferred was a BA/BS or MA/MS, but what if the degree was the PhD? The 1895 Code offers no guidance here. It remains unknown how dark blue was used originally, whether it was a degree-specific colour or a subject-specific colour, or if usage rendered it appropriate for both.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> The PhD colour description was written in 1986 but was not published in the ACE book until 1987. Quotations from the Minutes of the Trustees [of Columbia College], 1896, and *American Colleges and Universities*, edns 3 (1936), 8 (1960), 11 (1973), and 13 (1987) (Washington: American Council on Education, 1936–87).

<sup>6</sup> Dr Nicholas Groves coined the terms ‘faculty-specific’ and ‘degree-specific’. I use ‘subject’ instead of ‘faculty’ because in the US context the meaning of latter term is unclear, particularly when reading the Code.

One way to figure out what the Code intended is to look at how it was interpreted when its creators were still walking university grounds. In doing so we find an example of professors who understood faculty colours to refer to degree titles, not to faculties as I have suggested. At the University of Pennsylvania, professors formally notified the provost in the spring of 1896 of their displeasure that some degrees were not recognized in the Code. The provost responded by suggesting alternative colours to borrow until their subjects were recognized.<sup>7</sup> Although the source does not mention which degrees these were, they may have been mechanical engineering, civil engineering and practical chemistry, which Pennsylvania awarded in 1894.<sup>8</sup> They appear in the commencement programme in a list along with degrees in arts, science, philosophy and law, suggesting they were the names of the degrees. If that was the case, it would suggest that they were individual degree titles instead of units within science, and that their professors—the ‘faculty’—sought equal recognition.

We do not know which colours the provost assigned to the engineering and chemistry degrees, if indeed these were the ones in question two years later. Did he move them under the golden yellow of science, or did he select a colour from outside the Code? Worth noting is Pennsylvania’s own 1887 academic dress statute, in which the all science graduates wore cardinal except those in veterinary medicine, who wore light blue.<sup>9</sup> Assuming that between 1887 and 1896 engineering and chemistry graduates had worn light blue, a request by the instructors in those subjects, if in fact it came from them, would have been a move to expand the use of faculty colours to cover specific fields.

### Choosing the original faculty names

I suggest that the Pennsylvania request was not in keeping with the spirit of the Code because its writers, all of whom were either presidents or trustees of a university, would not have limited the number of faculties (and therefore colours) to eight. Ignoring the many other important subjects in the US at the time would be hard to explain. Divinity is a good example. The Code names theology instead and assigns it scarlet. Would the writers have intended to exclude one degree in favour of its companion? It seems unlikely to me particularly because two of the Code’s writers held DD degrees. Henry C. Potter, an Episcopal bishop, was a Columbia trustee, and Charles Ray Palmer was a Yale trustee.<sup>10</sup> Another example is dentistry. The first college of dentistry in New York City opened in 1852 and another in 1865, so the committee could hardly have been unaware of this branch of medicine, particularly if any of its members had ever had a toothache.<sup>11</sup> Instead of ignorance (or perfect

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7 [Mark Frazier Lloyd], ‘Commencement Notes’, an article in the pamphlet *University of Pennsylvania: Two Hundred Fortieth Commencement*, 21 May 1996, p. 8.

8 One Hundred and Thirty-Eighth Commencement Conferring Degrees in Arts, Science, Law and Philosophy, University of Pennsylvania, 5 June 1894 [p. 4]. On-line at <[http://www.archives.upenn.edu/primdocs/upg/upg7/upg7\\_1894june5.pdf](http://www.archives.upenn.edu/primdocs/upg/upg7/upg7_1894june5.pdf)> (accessed 23 July 2012).

9 University Archives and Records Center, University of Pennsylvania, UPG 7, Commencement and Convocation Program Collection, 1887, 8 June.

10 Potter: *Officers and Graduates of Columbia University, Originally the College of the Province of New York Known as King’s College, 1754–1900* (New York: Columbia, 1900), p. 5; Palmer: Obituary Record of Yale Graduates 1910–1911, *Bulletin of Yale University*, 7.9 (July 1911), p. 22.

11 The School of Dental and Oral Surgery opened in 1852 and merged with Columbia in 1916.

teeth and gums), I suggest that the Code meant to include all degrees in medical fields in the same category: to be subject-specific.

Engineering should also be considered here. Even if it had not been a focus of the Pennsylvania request in 1896, engineering was a significant field of study in the US at the time. Thirty-four years earlier, President Lincoln had signed the Morrill Act that granted land to the states that created universities that taught, among other subjects, the ‘mechanical arts’. Two of the universities participating in the Code’s writing had engineering schools. Yale founded its in 1852 and granted its first Doctor of Engineering in 1860; Columbia’s was founded in 1864, and conferred degrees titled Engineer of Mines (EM), Civil Engineer (CE), Metallurgical Engineer, Sanitary Engineer (SE) and Electrical Engineer (EE) when the Code was written.<sup>12</sup>

We know that these degrees were important enough at the time that the writers of the Code could not have been unaware of them. If they had intended for the Code’s faculty colours to be applied specifically to the name of the degree, what reason would they have had to ignore all but eight? We can rule out a tight deadline because nearly two years had passed since the suggestion of an academic dress code had first been put forward. What of enthusiasm? In modern days we can hardly imagine university presidents meeting together to discuss the shapes and colours of gowns and hoods. Yet even if some of the committee members were engaged only partially with the matter at hand, one of its writers was John J. McCook, who had received approval from his fellow Princeton trustees to propose a national standard; his initiative led to the Code. Gardner C. Leonard, the Albany, N.Y., merchant who had the biggest commercial role in popularizing academic dress in the US, was a consultant who prepared sketches for the group and in the following decades would write articles promoting the Code’s logic. Both McCook and Leonard were likely to have been willing to offer as many colours as the committee was patient enough to review if the group’s collective goal had been to identify as many subjects as possible.<sup>13</sup>

If it is accurate to say that the Code intended to be degree-specific and to include any subject supervised by a faculty, then an obvious question follows. Why is the Code subject-specific today? The current version calls for the faculty colour to be ‘distinctive of the subject to which the degree pertains’ instead of pertaining to the degree itself. That line was inserted in 1960 and remains there still, applying to all degrees except the PhD. Though even with the PhD, one may choose to wear dark blue or the colour of the subject studied; one is not required to wear dark blue.

### **c. 1911: The change to subject-specific colours begins**

The changes that led to the modern (post-1960) use of faculty colours seem to have been decades in the making. I see three developments leading to the change, starting with the

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The New York College of Dentistry opened in 1865 and merged with New York University in 1925.

<sup>12</sup> Josiah W. Gibbs earned the Yale engineering doctorate. The third university participating in the Code’s writing, New York University, added an engineering school in 2008. Columbia engineering degrees: *Columbia University Alumni Register 1754–1931* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1932), p. xv.

<sup>13</sup> See Donald L. Drakeman’s research on McCook in Stephen L. Wolgast, compiler, ‘The Inter-collegiate Code of Academic Costume: An Introduction’, *TBS*, 9 (2009), p. 14.

Pennsylvania example. Instructors, seeing a list of a handful of subjects granted the distinction of a colour, wanted a colour to indicate their own subjects.

### *Perquisite of the academy*

Second, academic dress was a benefit easily bestowed upon instructors in the early 1900s, a time when their role in the administrative hierarchy was diminishing. As universities became more complex to run, their administration moved from the ‘brotherhood of professors’ to trained managers. Providing instructors with the specialized academic dress may have helped assuage the loss of a meaningful role in running their campuses.<sup>14</sup> Administrators had another benefit in implementing colourful costume. Academic dress allowed universities to show off their professionals to visitors at commencement and other ceremonies at a time when professionalization was becoming important in many fields.<sup>15</sup>

### *Dissatisfaction with colours*

The third reason was the lack of popularity for the Code’s colour scheme. By 1911 the list of faculty colours had grown to seventeen, each of which is still worn today.<sup>16</sup> The enlarged palette attracted an outspoken critic who had graduated from Columbia. The Revd Dr Hugh Birkhead (AB 1899, MA honoris causa 1907) was an Episcopal priest and the rector of Emmanuel Church, in Baltimore. He wore clerical vestments regularly, under, perhaps, his master’s hood, and had become familiar with the functions of academic garments, leading him to lodge a complaint in 1913 with Columbia about the colour combinations appearing on some academic hoods.

In letters to the chairman of Columbia’s trustees, its president and its provost, Birkhead complained that the combination of faculty and university colours on the hood was ‘painfully discordant, and often hideous’, believing that Leonard had imposed his ideas on universities, which then acquiesced in his plan. Birkhead proposed that several prominent universities meet with artists to improve the hoods’ palette and to switch the positions of the degree colour and the university colours; that is, to move the degree colour to the lining and to move the university colours to the edging of the cowl.

His complaints were met with some sympathy. ‘[T]he hoods as now designed are ugly’,

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14 ‘The perquisites [of faculty clubs and academic dress] were all a function of organization, and while in no sense could they replace what was now lost, they contributed immeasurably to the morale of academic man.’ Frederick Rudolph, *The American College and University: A History* (1961; repr. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1965), p. 408.

15 ‘The commencement ritual which had well served the varied purposes of the American college now assumed a new purpose: the exhibition of the new professionals, drawn up in order of rank and wearing their badges of merit.’ *Ibid.*

16 The list is part of an article written by Leonard, who does not mention when they were adopted by the Code if, indeed, they had been formally adopted at the time. The nine new faculties and their colours:

Commerce & Account’cy . Drab	Dentistry . . . . . Lilac	Engineering . . . . . Orange
Forestry . . . . . Russet	Library Science . Lemon	Oratory . . . . . Silver-grey
Pedagogy . . . . . Light Blue	Pharmacy . . . . . Olive	Veterinary science . Grey

G.C.L. [Gardner Cotrell Leonard], in Paul Monroe, ed., *A Cyclopedia of Education*, ‘Academic Costume’, s.v. (New York: Macmillan, 1911), Vol. I, p. 16.

the university secretary, Frank D. Fackenthal, wrote on behalf of the president (who was travelling at the time), agreeing also that the colours should switch places. Nicholas M. Butler, the president, later wrote to Birckhead saying that he was 'largely in sympathy' with him but that the Code was too widely in use to be changed.

Birckhead wrote back, and Butler sent the stack of letters to the provost, Prof. William H. Carpenter. After two weeks Carpenter wrote a six-page letter to Birckhead. The hood colours are sometimes 'inharmonious and somewhat bewildering,' Carpenter acknowledged. When mismatches do occur, they 'are incidental rather than fundamental' to a hood's purpose of identification and were not, in his view, 'obtrusive or inartistic'.

Birckhead had complained that the Code was forced upon universities by Leonard. In Carpenter's reply, he included a portion of a Yale statement (which Birckhead had sent to Butler, and which is not among the letters) as evidence that the Code's writers had proceeded deliberately and that the outcome was 'not the matter of the accidental interference of any one man', naming Leonard. Carpenter signed off writing that his judgment was preliminary and 'open to amendment'.

Amendments ensued. 'I think we entirely agree,' Birckhead wrote, 'that in the present costume the hood is frequently inharmonious and ugly.' Why not consult with the famous portraitist John S. Sargent, Birckhead asked. Were he to propose a palette, the 'improvements will then be made plain'.

Carpenter, by this point, had had enough. 'Of course, a man like Mr. Sargent would be able to make a more harmonious color scheme, but I do rather seriously doubt its greater heraldic fitness and particularly so since this whole matter has been rather carefully considered ...' Birckhead must have understood he was getting nowhere, for no reply from Baltimore, if one was made, exists.<sup>17</sup>

The exchange is notable for bringing out from the highest Columbia administrators their dissatisfaction with hood colours. While these letters show the feelings of only three men at only one university, I think it is possible that other administrators, on other campuses, would have expressed similar feelings, particularly if pressed by an alumnus who was focussed on the matter.

I propose that these three actions and reactions—the wishes of the instructors for identification; the desire of administrators to mollify them and to show them off; and the lack of enthusiasm among some in the academy for the colour scheme—combined to lead to a new interpretation of the faculty colours as subject-specific instead of degree-specific. When universities adjusted their implementation of the Code, the Code reacted by adjusting too.

In 1959 the ACE committee on academic costume met and codified the list of colours and faculties that was put into effect in 1960 and remains in use today. The Code's guidelines on use, however, would continue to change.

## **Demonstration of multiple interpretations**

With the instructions' back-and-forth, one should not be surprised to see the Code used in different ways. Since 1973, the text of the Code has pointed out that it is not a set of 'enforce-

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<sup>17</sup> Letters from Hugh Birckhead, to and from G. L. Rives, Frank D. Fackenthal, Nicholas M. Butler, and William H. Carpenter; 6 March to 6 May 1913, *passim*; Central Files; Box 33, Folder 2: Commencement; University Archives; Columbia University in the City of New York.

able rules' but rather 'guidelines,' implying that variations are permitted. In a 1967 memo, the committee charged with maintaining the Code had gone further, writing that 'the general guidelines are as stated and should not be interpreted as supported by highly detailed and hard-and-fast regulations on file in some central place.'<sup>18</sup>

We can examine what happens when the agency issuing guidelines makes clear that it will not be enforcing them. In 1984, three years before the current version of the Code was published, two professors with keen eyes, S. Mark Strickland and John L. Fluitt, conducted what is certainly one of the few surveys (if not the only one) of how faculty colours are used in the US.<sup>19</sup> The results are not surprising in light of the various changes the Code itself had made. The results must be read with the understanding that at the time the contradictory 1973 guidelines were in effect, and had been reprinted the year before the study. Depending which section of the Code one was reading, the faculty colour was either subject-specific (this appears first, in the section on hoods) or degree-specific (which appears later, in a section on special circumstances).

The survey shows that of 280 universities awarding the MA, only 39 followed what I suggest was the Code's then-current intention (from the version published in 1973) of using the subject area colour on the hood. That is 13.9 per cent of universities, just a bit higher than the 12.2 per cent which used the subject area colour for an MS's hood (28 of 230). Following the code's alternative choice, the degree-specific guideline, we find white used for the MA at 68.9 per cent of universities, and golden yellow for the MS at 83.9 per cent of them. If good news is what we seek, then it is that or other of the dual instructions of 1973 were followed by 82.8 per cent of universities awarding the MA, and by 96.1 per cent of those awarding the MS.

Like the author, Strickland and Fluitt understood the proper choice of colour to be subject-specific. They note that the Code also included the degree-specific guideline but dismiss it by explaining that both it and a 1965 directive from Cotrell & Leonard that advocated the same thing 'probably are not influential in affecting present practices[;] they probably do reflect past policies.'<sup>20</sup> Their data, however, contradicts their suggestion. The authors also pointed out the confusion universities create when they depart from the Code. '[T]he utility of the tradition has been significantly diminished,' they write.<sup>21</sup> To find out which colours universities were using for master's and doctoral degrees, 'a nation-wide survey was conducted in the early fall of 1984'. They sent postcards to 452 universities, including '[v]irtually every institution ... which offers a doctoral degree'. The card offered a simple mix-and-match format (see Fig. 1).

Of the 336 cards that were returned, 37 were spoiled, leaving 299 to tally. The names of the universities are not reported. The results make clear that universities overwhelmingly

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18 Memo from Committee on Academic Costume and Ceremony and the Commission on Academic Affairs, American Council on Education, to the Council's member institutions, 9 Nov. 1967, Central Files; Box 625, folder 26: Academic Costume; University Archives, Columbia University in the City of New York.

19 'Academic Colors ... Academic Confusion', *College and University: The Journal of the American Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers*, 61.1 (Fall 1985), pp. 26-31.

20 *Ibid.*, p. 30.

21 *Ibid.*, p. 26.

Please place the number of the color your institution prescribes for the outer velvet trim of the hoods for the degrees listed.

Type of Degree	Hood Trim Color
Master of Arts	_____ 1 - Black
Master of Education	_____ 2 - Dark Blue
Master of Science	_____ 3 - Light Blue
Doctor of Education	_____ 4 - White
Doctor of Philosophy	_____ 5 - Golden Yellow
	_____ 6 - Subject area color
Name of Institution _____	

FIG. 1

used the degree name to determine faculty colour. The results for masters' degrees are in Table 1.

The degree's name is the clear preference for each master's degree. We must remember that selecting white for an MA instead of the subject area colour was not necessarily wrong. The same applies to the MS and, to a lesser extent, to the MEd. At first glance we may be surprised that arts' second-most common colour, used for 14.6 percent of degrees, was that of science; one can complete a BA in many scientific fields, however, leading to the appropriate choice of golden yellow as the subject-area lining.

Two doctoral degrees were part of the survey (see Table 2). At the time the authors' postcards were sent out, in the autumn in 1984, the person who earned an 'interdisciplinary doctorate' was to wear the colour of her principal field of study, a guideline that had been first published in 1973. In the Code's example, one who studied urban affairs could have worn copper (economics), peacock blue (public administration), or the colour of 'another field already assigned ...' It would then seem that 'subject area color' is the closest match to 'principal field of study', but was chosen by only 13.4 per cent of universities. What is surprising is that 80.7 per cent used dark blue for the PhD. The result may suggest that dark blue was already the popular choice, one that the Code would follow by making it official in just a few years.

Table 1

Colour	MA		MEd		MS	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Black	3	1.1	1	0.5	0	0
Dark Blue	3	1.1	1	0.5	3	1.3
Light Blue	1	0.4	166	84.3	0	0
White	193	68.9	13	6.6	6	2.6
Golden Yellow	41	14.6	2	1.0	193	83.9
Subject-area colour	39	13.9	14	7.1	28	12.2
<b>Total</b>	<b>280</b>		<b>197</b>		<b>230</b>	

Table 2

Colour	EdD		PhD	
	Number	%	Number	%
Black	1	0.6	2	0.7
Dark Blue	6	3.8	217	80.7
Light Blue	139	88.0	2	0.7
White	2	1.3	7	2.6
Golden Yellow	2	1.3	5	1.9
Subject area colour	8	5.1	36	13.4
<b>Total</b>	<b>158</b>		<b>269</b>	

Doctorates in education nearly always used education's colour. Take out the eleven universities that used a different specific colour (including one that uses the unassigned black) and it is arguable that 93 per cent of EdD's were wearing an appropriate colour.

The authors provide no explanation for including the choice of black, which has never appeared in the Code. Was it a red herring, a trick answer?

### **Beyond the Code: One unique colour scheme**

As it happens, at least one institution currently uses black for some of its hood linings. Wichita State University, in Kansas, uses it for three subjects, and for other subjects three to five non-Code colours (five if we can discern between Wichita State's blue for education and light blue, and between its royal blue for the PhD in communications and dark blue).

According to information published in 2009, Wichita State had embraced a colour scheme outside the Code's list. Creativity helps keep academic dress alive, and this is a creative use of colours. In Wichita State's College of Liberal Arts & Sciences these fields are assigned black. The Code's colour is listed along with the faculty name the ACE uses (if different).<sup>22</sup>

<b>WSU department</b>	<b>WSU colour</b>	<b>ACE colour (ACE title)</b>
Philosophy	Black	Dark Blue
Religion	Black	Scarlet (theology)
Communication	Black	Crimson (journ.) or Silver Grey (oratory & speech)

Other fields at WSU with colours different from the ACE list also use new colours instead of borrowing from one already in the Code:

Education	Blue	Light blue
Dental Hygiene	Lavender	Lilac
Public Health Sciences	Mint	Salmon
Physical Therapy	Teal	Sage Green (physical education)
Medical Technology	Mint	Green (medicine) or Orange (engineering)?

One discipline has a different colour for each degree:

<b>Communication Sciences</b>	BA: Mint	Golden Yellow (science)?
<b>&amp; Disorders</b>	MA: White	Golden Yellow (science)?
	PhD: Royal Blue	Dark Blue or Golden Yellow

A faculty colour scheme that is unique to a university should be greeted as a welcome sign of life as the ACE scheme becomes increasingly outdated. But a weakness pops up in identifying the hood with the university. Wichita State's hoods are lined sunflower yellow with a black chevron, making it one of more than a dozen institutions with hoods lined yellow or gold with a black chevron, according to Sheard. One is in Kansas (Ottawa) and two are in neighbouring Nebraska (Wayne State College and Doane).

### **Influence of the cap and gown industry**

While some changes to faculty colours probably come from within a university, the outside influence of robemakers is another likely source for variation. Robemakers have taken the

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<sup>22</sup> Wichita State University faculty colours, from a web site no longer active (accessed 11 Nov. 2009). Letters to the University seeking information on its faculty colours were unanswered.

reins in directing universities to alternative faculty colours ever since the ACE stopped updating them. Unfortunately the robemakers tend to work independently of one another, creating somewhat different lists of which areas get which colours. One, Murphy Robes, labels its list 'in accordance with the' Code despite departing from it. An unsuspecting university official with responsibility for commencement procedure could be forgiven for believing that kelly green is proper for hospital administration and gold for physics, as Murphy specifies. The firm saves golden yellow for 'science and biology', uses silver for chiropractic (which in the Code allocates to oratory), and switches agriculture to brown (which is for fine arts in the Code) from maize (which Murphy allots to horticulture).<sup>23</sup>

Such inventions smell badly enough to purists even without the claim that they have been approved by a higher authority. Other robemakers did not even share their source. Strickland and Fluitt, in their survey, asked five robemakers to provide copies of the guides they followed when outfitting graduates. Four replied (they aren't named). While two of them sent copies of the Code, the other two sent catalogues which contained no information about colours.

Robemakers are sure to approach the question of colour differently. No business is immune from the demands of turning a profit, and the competition for institutional customers of 'cap and gown' is typically won by who submits the cheapest bid. The quality makers either go out of business or are bought by their larger competitors. Yet one can see the potential reward for entering the fray. In 1972 one newspaper wrote: 'The national market for caps and gowns alone [i.e. hoods too but not religious garments] is estimated at \$10 million annually.' Adjusted for inflation the figure is \$54 million in 2012, which is roughly equal to the inflation-adjusted turnover estimated in 1936 of \$3.3 million (of \$54.6 million).<sup>24</sup>

Even during the Great Depression it was a growing field, according to a government report issued in 1934. 'The Academic Costume Industry—including clerical, choir and judicial robes—employed more people during 1933 than during 1928.' The report states that academic manufacture and hire accounted for 90 per cent of the industry, 'and of this business fully 80% entails only the rental of caps, gowns and hoods'.<sup>25</sup>

The manufacturers made adjustments to academic dress besides adding faculty colours, demonstrating variation where we expect to see none. A now-defunct Philadelphia robemaker, National Academic Cap & Gown, published this description in 1940: 'Sometimes the full shaped [doctor's] hood has a rounded tippet and the liripoop or tail[,] as it is called, is shortened, or absent entirely.'<sup>26</sup>

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23 In its defence, Murphy Robes primarily serves the religious field. <<https://www.murphyrobes.com/index.cfm?event=page.display&pageID=48%20>> (accessed 12 June 2012).

24 M. A. Farber, 'Graduation Styles: A Time of Change', *New York Times*, 22 June 1972. R. L. Duffus, 'A Million Graduations', *New York Times*, 7 June 1936. The latter article reported \$20,000,000 in annual turnover for businesses in commencement ceremonies, including 150,000 university graduates and 750,000 high school graduates, or about \$3.3 million on universities. Inflation calculator from the U. S. Bureau of Labor Statistics.

25 'Code of Fair Competition for the Academic Costume Industry', National Recovery Administration, 19 February 1934, Approved Code No. 299, Registry No. 1716—01, pp. 211–15.

26 E. J. C[ohen], ed., *History of Academic Caps, Gowns, and Hoods: The Intercollegiate Bureau of Academic Wear* (Philadelphia: National Academic Cap & Gown Co., 1940), p. 25.

But it is with faculty colours that we are most concerned here. The phenomenon of robe-makers' unilaterally creating their own lists of faculty colours started at least as early as 1966. Robert Armagost reports that E. R. Moore changed architecture's colour that year to blue-violet and created metallic gold for psychology.<sup>27</sup>

Results like these show why the ACE would be wise to convene another committee to review the Code, if only to adjust it so that the Code more closely matched practice. Another survey similar to the one in 1984 should be conducted first. Strickland and Fluitt made four recommendations appropriate for the new committee. Two suggestions essentially call for the Code to be adopted and followed. The third suggests that colours for the PhD become subject-specific. 'Thus the hood trimming for a Doctor of Philosophy degree in Business Administration would be drab ...' just as any degree in business would, such as the MBA. Their final proposal is one as relevant today as it was twenty-seven years ago. '[S]ubject areas should be made more specific to reduce the chance of assigning an incorrect color to a subject, and more comprehensive, to include the new subject majors being offered.'<sup>28</sup>

Their recommendations remain useful. Without reform, Americans do not know if a hood is showing the graduate's degree title or field of expertise, nor will we know where she learned it. All that hoods can be relied upon to do is to show the wearer's degree level and add a bit of colour to academic ceremonies.

## A manifesto

The hoods worn by most graduates of American colleges and universities are in danger of becoming nothing but colourful accessories if the meanings they were once intended to display continue to fade away. The Code seems to elevate some new faculties above coequal ones: why give forestry and social work their own colours but not history, the classics, or physics?

An alternative should treat subjects equally. That requires taking away the colours of some subjects and creating others. Approached carefully, the result will include fewer colours than before because the subjects will represent broad academic endeavours into which all fields of instruction should fit. If the result is successful, adding colours later would be unnecessary because scholars' work, no matter how specific or innovative or esoteric, would fit within the new framework.

Here, then, is a proposal to simplify the system. The plan includes nineteen colours, six fewer than currently in the Code. Of those nineteen, one is new. Six subjects disappear, and three others are moved to different subject names.

My proposal should not be taken as carved in stone. Etched in sand may be more accurate because I consider my reorganization of academic subjects to be the beginning of a discussion of areas, not the conclusion of one. Similarly, the new colours I assign could with the help of a specialist be selected to achieve the harmony that critics of a century ago sought. This manifesto seeks to create a framework from which a significant change in the Code could start.

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<sup>27</sup> 'University Uniforms: The Standardization of Academic Dress in the United States', *TBS*, 9 (2009), p. 148.

<sup>28</sup> Strickland and Fluitt, pp. 30-31.

A primary goal in my scheme is reducing the number of colours assigned to the liberal arts. In the humanities, oratory loses its colour by moving into arts and letters, while philosophy keeps its place, preserving the tradition of the PhD's dark blue. To give a distinction to the social sciences within the humanities I co-opt the colour of public administration, peacock blue, for fields including public administration and economics (the latter currently is copper, a shade of orange). Peacock blue fits in with dark blue and, of course, white while staying a bit separate from education, and it illustrates another of my goals: using analogous colours for related subjects.

The new arrangement and colours of the sciences demonstrate this idea. Gone are the discrete categories for agriculture and forestry, both of which become part of life sciences. This new subject takes on maize, fitting easily into the yellow-orange range that now identifies the hard sciences (golden-yellow from science for the field that includes physics, astronomy, and others that study the inanimate world), systems science (orange, from engineering, which it includes along with architecture, library science and the fields that study the systems we create including computer science and mathematics), and behavioural science (red-orange, a new colour, for psychology, social work and others). Taken together, the four science colours include what had been seven subjects and their seven colours.

I propose fewer changes outside the arts and sciences. Education remains light blue but it expands to cover physical education, whose colour (sage green) is taken by health professions because they had included physical therapy. Sage green is related to the green of medicine, showing the subject's relationship to the healing arts. Music merges with fine arts; fine arts takes pink to connect it to the 1895 origin and to move it on the spectrum further from the warm tones of science and the neutral colour of business (drab).

The label for the colours should change too. Organizing them under the term 'faculty' colours hides their purpose behind a misunderstood and imprecise word. Instead, I suggest calling them subject colours. A small change, perhaps, in a step toward clarity. Only one change in the text of the Code would be required. Under Trimmings, it currently reads: '... while the color should be indicative of the subject to which the degree pertains.' Under this proposal that line would change to read: '... the color should indicate the subject.' (A few other alterations in the text here and there would update the examples of colours and their subjects.)

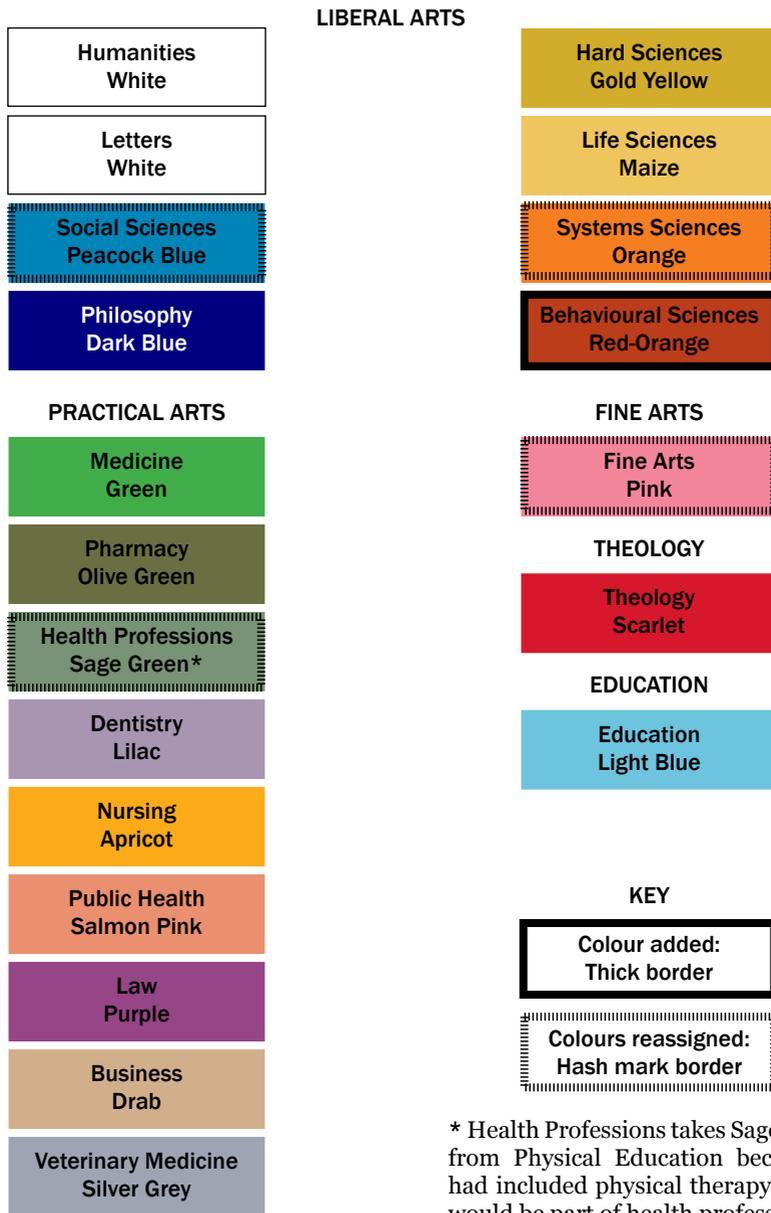
As with the existing Code, this plan would be a guide, not a rule, when it replaced the existing text on faculty colour. As a guide, the plan would permit a university to choose where certain fields lie. Journalism, for example, was once included in letters (before getting its own colour in 1960) and some universities continue to teach it as part of an arts curriculum even as more universities are considering it a social science; the decision to grant it white or aquamarine would belong to the university granting the degree. The idea is for the colour to show the concepts studied or the method of instruction rather than the name they were taught under.

If the proposal were to be accepted, anyone holding a degree would be permitted to wear the dress in effect at the time his or her degree had been granted, although the new Code would be equally appropriate. Any university using its own faculty colours would be permitted to continue to do so.

The new text follows, with the changes noted for emphasis by italics.

TRIMMINGS: The binding or edging of the hood to be of velvet or velveteen, in width two inches, three inches, and five inches for the bachelor's, master's and doctor's degrees, respectively; *the color should indicate the subject*. For example, the trimming for the degree of Master of Science in Ag-

riculture should be maize, representing *life sciences*, rather than golden yellow, representing science, and the degree of Master of Library Science should be orange, representing systems sciences. No academic hood should ever have its border divided to represent more than a single degree.



\* Health Professions takes Sage Green from Physical Education because it had included physical therapy, which would be part of health professions.

## Summary of changes

### LIBERAL ARTS

Arts	(White-Blue range)	Science	(Yellow-Orange range)
Humanities	White	Hard Sciences	Gold Yellow
Letters	White	Life Sciences	Maize
Social Sciences	Peacock Blue	<i>[Subsumes Agriculture (maize), Forestry (russet)]</i>	
	<i>[Subsumes economics (copper), Public Administration (peacock blue)]</i>	Systems Sciences	Orange
Philosophy	Dark Blue	<i>[Subsumes Engineering (orange), Library Science (lemon), Architecture (was part of Fine Arts' brown)]</i>	
		Behavioural Sciences	Red-orange

### PRACTICAL ARTS

Medicine	Green
Dentistry	Lilac
Pharmacy	Olive Green
Nursing	Apricot
Public Health	Salmon Pink
Health Professions	Sage Green
Law	Purple
Business	Drab
Veterinary Medicine	Silver Grey

### FINE ARTS

Fine Arts	Pink (was brown)
	<i>[Subsumes Music (pink)]</i>

### THEOLOGY

Theology	Scarlet
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### EDUCATION

Education	Light Blue
	<i>[Subsumes Physical Education (sage green)]</i>

### Colours eliminated

Brown	Fine Arts (which becomes pink)
Citron	Social Work
Copper	Economics
Crimson	Journalism
Lemon	Library Science
Russet	Forestry

### Colour added

Red-orange	Behavioural Sciences
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### Colours reassigned

Peacock Blue	Social Sciences (now including Public Administration)
Orange	Systems Sciences (now including Engineering)
Sage Green	Health Professions (was Physical Education, which is now in Education)

### Subjects reassigned

<i>Subject</i>	<i>Proposal</i>
Architecture	Systems Sciences (NB: Had been in Fine Arts since 1960.)
Agriculture	Life Sciences
Engineering	Systems Sciences
Forestry	Life Sciences
Library Science	Systems Sciences
Music	Fine Arts
Oratory	Arts and Letters
Public Administration	Social Sciences
Physical Education	Education
Social Work	Behavioural Sciences

### A Note on Philosophy

Dark Blue would continue to include the study of philosophy or the Doctor of Philosophy.