

Graduation

General Requirements for Graduation

- a. No degree will be conferred except on dates publicly announced.
- b. The student must complete the last two long-session semesters, or their equivalent, in residence in the School of Law of The University of Texas at Austin.
- c. A candidate for a degree must be registered at the University in the semester or summer session in which the degree is to be conferred and must apply by the deadline given in the academic calendar. This date falls about eight weeks before the end of a long-session semester and about four weeks before the end of a summer session.

Graduation Under a Particular Catalog

A student may receive a degree in the School of Law by fulfilling either the requirements given in the catalog in effect at the time the student entered the school or those given in the catalog governing any subsequent year in which the student was in residence in the school. In any case, however, all the requirements for a degree in the School of Law must be completed no earlier than 24 months and no later than 84 months after a student has commenced law study at the School of Law or a law school from which the school has accepted transfer credit.

Degrees with Honors

Graduates of the School of Law who are judged by the faculty to have completed the Doctor of Jurisprudence with scholarly distinction are awarded degrees with honors. In general, honors are awarded solely on the basis of work done at the University's School of Law, up to the 86 minimum hours required for the degree. Coursework taken after meeting the minimum required may not be counted toward honors calculations. No more than 35 percent of the graduating class may receive honors, high honors, and highest honors. No more than five percent may receive high honors and highest honors. No more than one percent may receive highest honors. For the purposes of calculating students' eligibility for degrees with honors, students graduating after a summer or fall semester will be included with the class that graduated in the previous spring semester.

The Sunflower Ceremony

Students are encouraged to attend the University's Commencement and the School of Law's Sunflower Ceremony, both held each spring. Summer and previous fall graduates are strongly encouraged to attend the Sunflower Ceremony along with spring graduates.

The story behind the Sunflower Ceremony began more than 100 years ago. For the first 15 or 20 years after the University was established in 1883, none of its graduates wore the cap and gown to graduation ceremonies. One spring day around the turn of the century, however, a salesperson called and offered to rent caps and gowns to graduating seniors. A committee of faculty and seniors met to consider the offer. At that time, the School of Law was housed in the basement of the Old Main Building. No one thought to send a message downstairs and invite anyone from the School of Law to the meeting. The committee decided that caps and gowns were appropriate and directed all seniors to wear the cap and gown to Commencement.

The School of Law students had different ideas. Because they had not been invited to the original meeting nor consulted on the matter, they rejected the mandate to wear caps and gowns. In true lawyer fashion, they then made their argument point by point, reasoning that caps and gowns were traditional to, and representative of, the rest of the

University but not a professional school like the School of Law. They proposed instead that graduating law students would wear white suits to Commencement.

The University president and faculty conferred and decreed that the law students must either conform to the wishes of the senior class or wear a significant insignia to the graduation exercises.

The School of Law students agreed, but again chose to present arguments regarding the insignia they chose, the sunflower. They reasoned that the sunflower was the best choice because it belonged to the genus *Helianthus*, part of a family that, like lawyers, is distributed all over the world. Also, the sunflower always keeps its face turned to the sun, as lawyers always turn to the light of justice. Thus the tradition was established, and graduating law students attend graduation exercises wearing the sunflower, and very often white suits as well, to this day.