

# Breaking down the caps and gowns

by Shelley Russell and Kaitlin Ugolik, June 13, 2009





Every graduation ceremony and convocation at Elon is marked with a parade of the academic scholars. It is one of the rare moments that all of the university professors can be found decked out from Tam to toe in full academic regalia. But with so many variations of dress, one almost needs to study regalia to fully understand its many symbols.

Academic regalia — the robes, caps, tams and tassels worn by faculty and staff at special ceremonies — have been around since medieval times in England. According to the American Council on Education, academic dress began as an attempt to keep clergy and scholars from dressing "excessively."

The styles and colors have remained relatively similar since that time and are based on the wearer's degree and granting institution.

### **The medallion**

President Leo Lambert dons the familiar gold medallion at events such as convocation, commencement and as a representation of Elon University at certain functions at other universities as part of his academic regalia. But the medallion has been used for these purposes since 1969 during the presidency of J. Earl Danieley.

Presented as a gift from the class of 1969, the medallion has become a symbol of Elon. Danieley, who served as Elon's president from 1957-1973, remembers being approached about the medallion by C.R. "Buzz" Yeager, the former president of Balfour, a company that designs custom products for universities and high schools.

The class of 1969 raised \$700 for the medallion, an amount nowhere near the cost of the gold seal surrounded by rubies. But Yeager's generosity made the gift to the school possible. The company designed and fabricated the medallion, selling it to the senior class for the amount it had raised.

Presidents Danieley, J. Fred Young and Lambert have since worn the medallion.

Danieley's name is engraved on the back of the medallion.

"Had I seen the design before it was made, I would have suggested against it," Danieley said. "Not because I do not feel that it is a great honor, but because it was going to be worn by every president."

The chain of the medallion is a sequence of maroon and gold squares linked together — each with the letters "E" and "C," for Elon College.

"It is a very handsome medallion," Danieley said. "Very attractive, and very appropriate."

### **The Mace**

The Mace was given to Elon in 1989 as a gift for the school's 100th anniversary. E.M. Martin, a friend of veteran faculty member A. L. Hook, donated the sterling silver Mace to Elon. Elon staff designed the Mace and it was fabricated in Portugal.

The seal of the Mace matches the Elon seal on the Medallion, with the words "Numen Lumen," Elon's motto meaning "spiritual light" and "intellectual light" in Latin.

The seal on the Mace sits atop a silver replica of the brick colonnades located outside of Whitley Auditorium and Alamance.

Dr. J. Earl Danieley, president emeritus, re-called the small well within the colonnades, which had a drinking fountain with a pedal to pump the well water. The fountain is still working today.

The Mace is carried at university events by a senior staff member, chosen by Dr. George Troxler, dean of cultural and special programs. Danieley carried the Mace for years at various events and commencement ceremonies.

The Mace is now on a rotation for each event. A different senior full professor (based on years of service at the university), will carry it for each academic procession, such as spring honors convocation, the freshman convocation and commencement.

The Mace is carried at least three times a year — four if there is a fall honors convocation. The Mace is carried whenever there is an academic procession.