

Sunflowers bow to caps and gowns

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Law school graduates will break an 80-year tradition this month when they don caps and gowns for the first time for graduation ceremonies.

From the turn of the century until the end of World War II, law school graduates wore white suits with sunflowers on their lapels to graduation. Since then, they have abandoned the white suits but not the sunflowers, which are worn in place of the dark, formal gowns.

"Up to around 1900, nobody wore caps and gowns at all," said Thomas Gibson, associate dean of the School of Law. "Around that time, a salesman talked to the senior students and convinced them to wear caps and gowns for graduation. The seniors recommended it to the president, who said that was fine. But the law students weren't consulted and said they didn't want the caps and gowns im-

posed on them since they didn't get to vote on the matter. The president told them they had to wear some kind of a significant insignia if they didn't wear the cap and gown, so they chose the sunflower."

Formal caps and gowns have never been worn to law school graduation ceremonies. Although all graduates of the law school will pin the traditional sunflowers to their lapels this year, nearly 100 of the 1982 graduates are expected to wear the cap, gown and hood as well.

The change came after a poll conducted by law school students showed that half of the students wanted to wear the caps and gowns, said Marle Hoepken, a graduation ceremonies organizer and secretary to Gibson. "So the 11 a.m. graduation ceremony will be for those with caps and gowns and the 2 p.m. ceremony will be for those with the sunflowers only," she said.

The May ceremony is split into two sections because a large number of students graduate after the spring semester. Approximately 350 law students are expected to participate this spring, Hoepken said.

The sunflower has a special meaning for the law students, Gibson said, because "just as the sunflower always turns its face towards the sun, so the lawyer turns his face towards justice."

Whether the formal caps and gowns will continue to be worn at the ceremony depends on the students, Hoepken said.

"The students who want to wear the cap and gown say they want to go back to the traditional way; but in the law school, that's not really traditional. The sunflower is traditional," she said. "By letting students wear caps and gowns, we're not really breaking traditions, we're just bending them a little."