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Mace creates new tradition for ceremonies

Pagentry, honor and celebration are timeless elements of the university's commencement ceremonies, highlighted this year by the unveiling of USF's new mace.

Designed, crafted and supervised by Harrison Covington, former dean and professor in the College of Fine Arts, the new mace serves as a symbol of the growth and prosperity of the university and the incorporation of former practices with new traditions.

Covington, a Tampa native, began his career with the university in 1961. He served as the first chair of the Art department and was a key player in the department's transition from a division to a college. He also served as the dean of the College of Fine Arts before his retirement from the university in 1982.

At the request of the university's Faculty Senate, Covington started working on the university's new mace in 1998. He researched the historical significance and meaning of the academic mace and then crafted a clay-and-foam-board model which he would eventually, in conjunction with New York silversmith Rob Butler, transform into the university's new symbol.

The tradition of the mace can be dated to Middle Ages kings, whose bodyguards would use a mace as an element of protection. It came to symbolize strength and authority. Gradually, universities adopted the use of a mace to show the right of academic institutions to grant degrees to graduates.

Covington designed USF's new mace to be used not only during commencement ceremonies, but also to serve as a representation of the university's responsibility to the future.

"The mace stands for a handing down of university responsibilities," Covington said. "This new design also incorporates some of the central ideas important during the early stages of the university, such as the seal." Designs of academic maces vary tremendously, but usually consist of a shaft topped with a large ornament representing the symbols of that institution's traditions and history.

From the top of the wooden spine's gold pine cone to the bottom of the mahogany staff, the mace stands as an embodiment of the university's "symbolic strengths."

The gold pine cone, at the top of the structure, represents growth and continuity, said Covington. Eight silver semi-circles, used as support structures for the pincone, stand for the eight colleges in existence when the mace was commissioned.

A globe is formed of the eight semi-circles, symbolizing the globe in the original USF shield. The university seal is mounted to both sides of a silver disc. The seal is supported by sun rays representing the "Sunshine State" and the original rising sun design of the first university shield.

Covington also incorporated the state Legislature's mission for state universities by inscribing "Teaching-Research-Service" on a band which supports the upper silver globe.

Covington suggested a "ceremonial passing of the mace" tradition be established with his work of art, which would be used to recognize the installation of future university presidents, as well as elections of Faculty Senate presidents and other university occasions.

When not in use, the mace is kept and displayed in the President's Office. Being trusted with the project was significant because it gave Covington the opportunity to continue his work with the university, he said.

"This was truly a continuation of what was started in 1961, when I first arrived here," Covington said. "As a native of the county, I got involved with USF because I thought it was important to support an educational institution that was giving chances to those who might not otherwise get an education."

Former College of Fine Arts Dean and Professor Harrison Covington designed USF's new mace, to be used in university graduations and other functions.

Campaign successful; Let them eat ice cream

The campaign is a success, and our faces are a mess.

An ice cream social took place on April 28 in the Alumni Center (is that hot fudge we see on your chin?) to celebrate reaching the goal — and beyond — of the university's Faculty and Staff Annual Campaign, which surpassed its $500,000 goal on April 7 with a total of $517,490.

As of April 20, the total climbed to $328,080, almost $50,000 more than funds raised in last year's campaign. At press time, the College of Nursing, the Graduate School and the Suncoast Gerontology Center had all reached 100 percent participation.

The Graduate School uniquely benefited from this year's campaign, thanks to a new area of giving established by President Betty Castor, the President's office and the Graduate Studies Department.

The Graduate Fellowship Fund was created in March to offer the different graduate departments the funds to create compensation packages for USF graduate school applicants. Graduate Studies Dean Dale Johnson said the fund is crucial to compete for top-quality graduate students.

The faculty and staff campaign funds scholarship programs, endowed scholarships and library enhancement endowments.

More than 600 scholarships for USFS employees have been generated from the campaign, said President Castor, and students have the chance to finish their educations.

Donors can designate their gifts to any of the more than 1,600 university areas which benefit from the program. Last year, the campaign raised roughly $280,000, surpassing its goal by more than $35,000.

To donate to the campaign, call Annual Giving at ext. 41607. Collections for the campaign will continue through June 30.

Reynolds Barbara J. Poyle
(LJC: PDY317)