

One Cord, Many Questions

Why do graduates have limited cord options?

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As we approach the end of the school year, the bittersweet sense of graduation for seniors lingers in the halls, classes, and throughout the entire school. The graduation ceremony entails a robe, a diploma, and, for some seniors, an honorary yellow chord. This symbolic cord that seniors carry typically only says one thing: academic success throughout their four years of high school.

At many schools throughout the U.S., graduates carry cords on every end of the color spectrum, showing different achievements they obtained over the countless days of their high school career. Students at Buffalo High School (BHS) similarly contribute to the school through their various activities and achievements. This makes many wonder why students at BHS only get one cord (with the exception of military and AVID); if they did not meet the grade requirements to carry this cord, they don't receive one at all.

"I think that if a student has earned a cord, they should be able to wear it at graduation because they worked really hard for it", Samantha Greig '26 said.

For every choice, there is always a reason behind it. BHS principal Mark Mischke states that the scarcity of graduation cords is driven by the goal that each and every student feels equal at the end of the day.

"They are in narrow focus in terms of trying to keep some consistency," Mischke said. "I think they are all really important,

but the further that gets away from only the academic cord, the more of a chance it will go sideways. I don't want to say that those other pieces aren't valuable, but I'm trying not to get to the point where we have cords for everything. I'm erring on the side of consistency because it's about the collective class."

Contrary to Mischke, Adalee Anderson '26 expressed that grad cords are not about fairness, but about showing your hard work throughout the years.

"I think students who completed activities at BHS over their four years deserve to display it through a cord," Anderson said. "I'm a state-level athlete and worked really hard for it in and out of school and im not receiving a cord for it. Just because someone else might feel left out, it's not the fault of the students who did meet the requirements of getting the cord."

Students also wish that their accomplishments could be shown as a way to symbolize their efforts.

"Many people have helped our school in a lot of ways, including the yearbook and running events," Taylor Whitney '26 said. "I feel like you should be able to have a cord that recognizes that hard work and dedication. It's like a symbol of your hard work finally paying off."

Agreeing with Whitney, Luke Gramstad '26 believes showing these contributions is important.

"I think we underdo it as a school," Gramstad said. "People should be allowed to have them, especially for certain accomplishments like Student Council and NHS. Some people have done more things in high school, and graduation chords are sort of like a symbol of involvement in the school."

The conversation surrounding graduation cords at Buffalo high school isn't just about what students wear as they walk across the stage—it's about how success is defined and recognized. For some students, equality in appearance creates a sense of unity, while for others, recognition is a meaningful way to honor years of their effort. Both perspectives reflect values that matter to the school's community.

Graphic by Juniper Lostetter