

# Celebrating eccentric chemistry graduation traditions

by **Andrea Widener**

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Credit: Phoenicia Robinson

Special surprise: Gorden's student got a uranium glass elephant for her graduation.

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**A**h, graduation season. The caps and gowns, the seemingly endless ceremonies, the backyard celebrations for family and friends.

For Ph.D. chemists, there are different graduation traditions that unite people who spent many—maybe too many—hours in the lab together. A Twitter query from @cenmag in December asked what traditions chemists have to celebrate this momentous occasion.

Not surprisingly, alcohol featured in many of the festivities. Several labs ask graduates to sign commemorative champagne bottles—after they consumed the contents, of course. **Mark Lorch** of the University of Hull remembers that his graduate lab would allow everyone to fire a champagne cork at the ceiling and then sign the mark it left behind.

“During the duller moments of the post-grad degree one would gaze upwards and select the spot you wanted on the ceiling,” he says.

It's a lucky student who graduates from **Kyle Plunkett's** lab at Southern Illinois University. Plunkett is an amateur brewmaster, and he makes a batch of beer to honor each freshly minted graduate. He and his student each get a bottle with a custom label featuring their picture together and the date. But don't worry: The remaining beer doesn't go to waste. “The rest is for a departmental kegger/graduation party,” he says.



Credit: Kyle Plunkett

Beer memories: Plunkett makes his students their own batch of home-brewed beer.

Graduates from **Steven Wheeler's** group at the