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University bans tossing graduation caps, but tradition is safe on Staten Island

by DIANE LORE

A ban on tossing graduation caps is causing controversy across the pond in Great Britain, but it will be hats off as usual at Staten Island's three colleges over the next few weeks.

A British college sparked the controversy when it banned the tradition of mortarboard tossing during commencement exercises because the falling hats could be dangerous.

According to the BBC, the University of East Anglia decided to ban the practice after a number of graduates had been hurt by the falling caps in recent years.

Instead, students have been urged to mime the throwing motion instead and have the hats added digitally to the photo afterward.

A university spokeswoman said injuries caused by falling mortarboards posed an "unacceptable risk."

But Wagner College spokesman Lee Manchester said he's never heard of an instance where anyone was injured by a tossed mortarboard.

"The throwing of mortarboards has never been an issue for us," he said, "so there's never been a reason to establish a policy."

And while Manchester said, "It doesn't appear to be a part of our culture," several hundred Wagner College graduates will have the opportunity to do so if they please during Friday's commencement ceremony on Grymes Hill.

On Saturday, it will be St. John's University's turn at its Grymes Hill campus.

"We do not have a policy regarding the throwing of mortarboards at our graduation ceremonies, nor have we had any reported injuries resulting from this practice at past commencement exercises," said St. John's spokesman Dominic Scianna.

And some 2,400 College of Staten Island grads will have the opportunity to do the same during June 2's commencement in Willowbrook.

"At CSI, we have a higher incidence of students doing an outstanding job of decorating their mortarboards with ornate designs and expressions of well-wishing and gratitude," said spokesman Ken Bach, adding that the college has no history of any injuries resulting from tossed mortarboards.