

# THE 2018 AUSTIN INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT HIGH SCHOOL COMMENCEMENTS INFORMATION PACKET

Welcome to The University of Texas at Austin Frank C. Erwin, Jr. Special Events Center and Congratulations on this most memorable of occasions.

There are a few quintessential moments in your life that define your lifetime, such as getting your driver's license, your first kiss, your wedding day(s), the birth of your children, maybe your first birdie putt. Your family member / friend has created a quintessential moment in their lifetime.

Savor the moment.

The Erwin Center staff hopes your experience at The Erwin Center is enjoyable and positive. To help with this, the Erwin Center Events Management staff has created this document for your information. Please read it over and let me know what you think. Bring it with you to the Erwin Center to assist you with any questions you might have. If you have additional questions, please contact Buzz Huber at (512) 748-4911, e-mail me at [buzz@utexas.edu](mailto:buzz@utexas.edu) or ask for me at the Erwin Center.

## PARKING

This packet is as close to chronological order as we can get, so let's start with the first and worst problem you'll have at the Erwin Center . . . parking. Or the lack thereof.

Before we go any further, the address for the Erwin Center for out of town friends / relatives with GPS capability is 1701 Red River St., Austin, Texas.

Parking and general traffic maneuverability has been impacted with the addition of the U.T. Dell Medical School. Phase 1 of that construction is thankfully finished, but just day to day, routine Austin traffic in the immediate vicinity is now impacting us. We cannot emphasize to you enough the importance of your arriving early and being prepared to be re-routed by APD at several intersections.

Please, please, please oh please, do your part in the congestion problem and just ride the **FREE** shuttle from the closest location to your address. Make the decision to do that right now before you read the next several paragraphs. None of what follows in the parking section of this pamphlet will apply if you just ride the **FREE** shuttle from the closest location to your address.

Should you decide to drive, your closest parking options are Lot 108 just south of the Erwin Center and Lot 118 at the intersection of the southbound I-35 feeder road and MLK, just north of the building. These lots can **ONLY** be entered from the southbound feeder road of I-35. Unless you arrive well before the doors open for the first ceremony of the day or at a perfect time between ceremonies, these lots will be full. If you do find a spot in these lots after the first ceremony of the day, you need to buy a Lotto ticket on the way home, because you're on a run with your good luck. They're the closest to the building and will by far and away be the fastest to fill up. A \$12.00 fee will be charged to park here. If you're in a dually, forget about these lots. Better yet, don't drive a dually to these ceremonies. All spaces are just too small.

**Portions of Lot 118 will not be available to the public during business hours as this lot is used by U.T. staff and employees. The entire lot will be available after 5:45 on weekdays.**

The Health Center Garage is located at the intersection of Trinity and 15<sup>th</sup>. Upon leaving the garage, take the sidewalk to Red River and expect to be re-directed by Event Staff to slower doors.

The Trinity parking garage located across Red River Street from the Erwin Center at the intersection of M.L.K. and Trinity is the next closest parking area to the Erwin Center. Entrance to this garage will only be allowed from the Trinity Street entrance, depending on the traffic situation when you arrive. This is an A.P.D. call that's made when traffic in that immediate area gets to be too heavy.

There's also a brand new parking garage located across the interstate in the baseball lot as a last chance garage. The East Campus Parking Garage. Check the state garage parking lots first, before selecting this one.

All of the aforementioned will charge \$12.00.

The next closest options for parking are the state garages along Trinity between 15<sup>th</sup> and M.L.K. These garages are not available before 5:00 p.m. and you will be ticketed if you park in here before 5:00 p.m. Parking availability will increase in these garages after 6:00 p.m. on weekdays and all day Saturday, June 9<sup>th</sup> These are stage garages and not affiliated with U.T.

Very important! Follow the directions of the ushers you'll see once you exit all these aforementioned garages. They're directing you to the building via the easiest, shortest distance. Look for ushers in neon green shirts or vests to direct you to where you need to go.

The best option for mobility impaired drop off will be to turn into Lot 118 – IF THE LOT IS FULL - from the southbound frontage road, tell the guard you're dropping a mobility impaired guest, drop your guest and then proceed to the potentially gridlocked Red River – more on that later - and hope someone will let you into the flow of traffic.

Your mobility impaired guest will have the option of walking across the terrace to a door or they can proceed down the sidewalk to the Red River doors. If your guest is in a wheelchair, the Red River doors are better suited for some of today's wheelchairs.

Once that good Samaritan lets you onto Red River, your best choice will be to turn right on Red River, right on MLK, right on the I-35 southbound frontage road, right on 15<sup>th</sup> and turn right at the second light onto Trinity. Find the entrance to the HCG on your right, a state garage on your left, if it's after 5:00 p.m. or the U.T. Trinity garage down the street at Trinity / MLK on your right.

Red River between 15<sup>th</sup> and MLK is now open in both directions. That sounds pretty cool but this stretch is only one lane in each direction for the south half of that block and all of it is in gridlock the closer we get to the start time of each ceremony, with guests wanting to drop off mobility impaired at the Red River doors, lost graduates, limos, and possibly even buses. While we're at it, let's throw in some morning and / or evening rush hour traffic, depending on the time of your ceremony. You are urged to stay away from this street unless you have mobility impaired guests who can't walk far.

While we're at it, if you're on westbound 15<sup>th</sup>, stay in the inside lane until you're past Red River. The outside lane is often blocked by traffic wanting to turn right on to Red River. Get the picture yet? It's a driver's maneuvering nightmare.

All of these and other lots and garages can viewed at <http://www.utexas.edu/parking/maps/>

Refer to the following schedule for start times and **approximate** end times when looking for a parking spot.

	<b>Date &amp; School</b>	<b>Doors Open</b>	<b>Begins</b>	<b>Ends @</b>
Tues. May 29	Eastside	9:30 a.m.	11:00 a.m.	12:30 p.m.
	Ann Richards	N/A	2:00 p.m.	3:30 p.m.
	Reagan	N/A	5:30 p.m.	6:45 p.m.
	Garza	N/A	7:00 p.m.	N/A
Wed. May 30	McCallum	8:30 a.m.	10:00 a.m.	11:45 p.m.
	Travis	N/A	1:00 p.m.	2:30 p.m.
	Crockett	N/A	4:00 p.m.	5:30 p.m.
	Bowie	N/A	7:00 p.m.	N/A
Thurs. May 31	LBJ / LASA	8:30 a.m.	10:00 a.m.	11:45 a.m.
	Anderson	N/A	1:00 p.m.	3:00 p.m.
	Lanier	N/A	4:00 p.m.	5:30 p.m.
	Akins	N/A	7:00 p.m.	N/A
Fri. June 1	Austin	7:30 a.m.	9:00 a.m.	N/A

Please remember these ending times are extremely approximate.

Also, if you're coming in from out of town, a shuttle service may be available from several hotels in the area and don't forget to carpool . . . carpool . . . carpool. Austin, Texas was recognized three years ago as having the 4<sup>th</sup> worst traffic in the nation – we've since "improved" to the 10<sup>th</sup> worst traffic in the nation - and you're about to find out why. Don't make this your headache. Make it someone else's.

And don't forget the numerous ride sharing companies in town.

### **MEETING YOUR PARTY**

This is easy. If you arrive in cars and you wish to meet the rest of your party or your friends, the best place to do this is at the Bevo statue on the north side of the building. This is the easiest location to describe and see. It's also the absolute best photo / selfie opportunity on the property.

### **ENTERING THE BUILDING**

Many regular attendees of the Erwin Center are familiar with only three entrances to the building when in reality there are as many as nine.

Due to traffic issues on Red River, all graduates will enter through the back door of the Erwin Center.

Also, be aware that you may well clash with an exiting group of brand new graduates, eager for their new lives to begin. Pay particular attention to this, especially if you're approaching from the north. You'll be like the spawning salmon fighting its way upstream and the graduates will be the current.

If someone in your party is mobility impaired, there is a ramp available to your immediate right as you enter the Red River doors, if stairs are a bad option. Once at the bottom of the stairs or ramp, please continue moving to the elevator located on the other side of the glass doors directly ahead of you.

Due to the heavy use of the elevator at load in, we ask that only the person who needs the elevator and the attendant use the elevator. The rest of the party can take the escalator up to the arena – or mezzanine - and wait for your party to emerge from the elevator. This helps tremendously in the speed of the line for the elevator.

All mobility impaired seating is located on the back row of the arena level or the third row of the mezzanine. Once again, due to heavy use of the mobility impaired seats, we ask that the person who needs this seating and one or two others use this row and the rest of the party find seating in the immediate area.

Additional public entrances are accessed by taking the northwest ramp – close to the MLK / Red River intersection – or the southwest steps, close to the 15<sup>th</sup> / Red River intersection up from the street for admittance into any available doors. When you arrive at the north terrace where the Bevo statue is, it's possible you'll see an enormous amount of people trying to get in, since most foot traffic comes this way.

Now is the time to blaze new trails. Walk around to any area of the building on this level and go in any other door, except for ceremonies on the 29<sup>th</sup>. Stick to the Red River side of the building on that date. Do not go up any ramps unless directed.

If you enter the seating area as the prior school's ceremony is ongoing, we ask that you respect the previous school's wishes and be as quiet as possible if you decide to try to find a seat. Once the previous school is finished with their ceremony, feel free to move down to better seats as they open up.

One other note: All guests will be required to walk thru a magnetometer as they enter the building. If the magnetometer alarms, that guest will need to be wanded. Think airports and TSA. You can do your part in expediting this process by emptying your pockets of EVERYTHING – cell phones, keys, change and Altoids tins are the big offenders – BEFORE entering the mag. Air horns and other noisemakers will be setting them off as well, so please don't waste your money on an air horn or other noisemakers.

Expect to be delayed by this, as about 30% of people – usually gentlemen - don't heed the advice and get wanded, which only holds up the line. Another reason to arrive early and beat the later arriving crowds.

### **ITEMS YOU CAN'T BRING IN THE BUILDING**

**We restrict entry to the items listed below. Please refrain from attempting to bring these into the Erwin Center.**

- 1) The Frank Erwin Center is a clear bag only facility. Please read the clear bag policy at [www.uterwincenter.com](http://www.uterwincenter.com). This policy will be strictly enforced.  
There'll be a mobile locker service available on the north plaza. Purses / backpacks / handbags can be checked in here for a fee.  
If you ride the **FREE** shuttle, A.I.S.D. staff will be at available at each pick up location handing out **FREE** clear bags. Take advantage of this. The lockers won't be free.  
Also, ladies, you need to empty the contents of your purse into these clear bags. The bag isn't for your purse, it's for the contents. Think about it. It defeats the purpose of the security of a clear bag. Don't laugh . . . you'd be surprised.
- 2) Food or beverages  
Concession stands are available for food and beverage purchases. Items needed for medical and/or infant care purposes are always acceptable.
- 3) Banners / Signs / Flags / Balloons  
Banners, signs or flags larger than an 8 1/2" by 11" letter sized paper will be turned away at the door. Items larger than that prove to be a line of sight problem for the crowd behind the banner. Balloons can be placed in this category as well since they create a line of sight problem.  
Anything mounted on a stick is expressly prohibited as well.
- 4) Noisemakers  
Noisemakers include air horns, whistles, air horns, rattlers, air horns, cowbells or any other item that would prove to be a distraction to our guests and / or graduates, up to and including air horns. Commencement ceremonies are looked upon by the quiet majority as a time of solemnity and respect for the graduates. They are experiencing a defining moment in their lives. Unfortunately, the noisy minority feel it's the perfect time to break out the noisemakers. **WE WILL CONFISCATE ANY NOISEMAKER WE FIND, UP TO AND INCLUDING AIR HORNS. DON'T FORGET . . . THINK T.S.A. AT THE AIRPORT.**
- 5) Smoking  
Smoking is not allowed on University of Texas property unless you're 6' away from a city street or the feeder road.
- 6) Fireworks and/or weapons  
In recent years, the concealed carry handgun license has started to become an issue. That permit is not recognized on any University property hosting a high school event. The only parties who can carry concealed weapons in the Erwin Center or on University property are law enforcement officers, on or off duty.
- 7) Baby strollers / Wheelchairs  
Technically, these are allowed in the doors but unattended baby strollers and wheelchairs must be left at the concourse doors (entrances into the building). There can be no unattended strollers and wheelchairs inside the seating area.
- 8) Comfort animals  
The Erwin Center and other U.T. venues have recently seen a large spike in guests attempting to bring in comfort animals. Please note that comfort animals are not recognized by the A.D.A. and therefore are not allowed in any University building. Service DOGS are fine. Comfort animals aren't.

#### **MEETING YOUR GRADUATE AFTER THE CEREMONY**

All graduates will exit the building through the Red River doors after the ceremony and - if it's a perfect world- meet you at the north end of the building by the Bevo statue or the flag poles. Once again, big photo / selfie opportunity. Check with your school to confirm any departure arrangements.

We ask that you move outside as quickly as possible to meet your graduate so we can begin to prepare for the next ceremony. Graduates will not be allowed back inside once they leave through the Red River doors.

### MISCELLANEOUS

Digital recordings are a major component of any commencement ceremony. Allow us to discuss a few points on these subjects.

Digital cameras are perfectly acceptable in a commencement exercise. You'll need to put all of your equipment in a clear bag. Please make sure your battery is charged before you arrive at the building as you won't be allowed to charge it at the Erwin Center, unless you want to stand over the cord. Obviously, we're not concerned with the power usage, but we are concerned with the safety factor of having loose cables on our floors.

Also, if you have a tripod, it will need to go in front of your chair and not impede guests who aren't in your party. The legs can't extend into the aisle. Monopods rule.

We ask that all recordings and photographers record and take photos from their seats. Please do not move to the floor as this only serves to disrupt the ceremony.

Hey parents and grandparents – Remember life without cell phones? I didn't have to include this paragraph until the mid 90s. Cell phones are a major part of our lives. Please be considerate enough to put your phone on discreet or turn it off after you find a seat. People tend to call in the early parts of the ceremony so they can meet up with their party. There aren't too many things ruder than having a seemingly endless litany of cell phone ring tones and sound bites going off as the colors are being presented or an invocation is taking place.

Outside of Section 25 /26 on the southwest concourse, the Erwin Center has a guest services booth. At this booth guests may locate items that were left behind at previous ceremonies, lost parents can be re-united with their children and assistive listening devices for the hearing impaired can be checked out.

If arrangements have been made for your school to have a hearing impaired signer, you'll sit in the lower rows of Section 46 / 47.

Lastly, let's deal with the bane of general admission commencements all across the land . . . the seat saver. Actually, the seat saver is okay. It's the row saver I'm talking about. I've been doing this for many years. I dare say I've coordinated more high school commencements over the years than most event coordinators in the State of Texas and I have yet to hear a reasonable person tell me how one rationalizes in their mind that it's okay to save dozens of seats, multiple rows of prime seats for someone who isn't even in the vicinity.

It's reasonable to save one or two seats, maybe even three. I get that. But when you start to make the seating area look like an indoor yard sale by marking each seat in multiple rows with a personal item such as an umbrella, sweater, purse, bath towel, dirty socks, brassieres, etc., that just doesn't seem fair.

And when told by the usher that you'll need to give up those rows to guests arriving in a timely manner, please come up with a different answer other than "They're on their way" – of course they are, even if they're in Round Rock, they're on their way – or "They're parking right now" – of course they are, and now they have a 20 minute walk in front of them.

There's no law that says you can't save row after row of prime seats, but there is the matter of courtesy and decency. You honestly can't come up with a good enough excuse to save quality seats..

I might suggest that you save as many as you wish . . . upstairs . . . in the mezzanine. Not down in the arena.

In closing, the five most important things to do to make this an even greater day than it will be is 1) take the **FREE** shuttle from the location closest to your address 2) arrive early 3) stay away from Red River 4) clear bags only and 5) don't save bunches of prime seats.

Once again, welcome, Congratulations and please call / email me with any questions / comments you may have. Please be aware that once these ceremonies begin, I won't be at my desk very much at all, so please call / email in the days before May 25<sup>th</sup>.

Savor the moment.

Mike "Buzz" Huber

Events Manager

The University of Texas at Austin Frank C. Erwin Jr. Special Events Center

512 471-4718 Office (Don't leave a message)

512 748-4911 Cell (Leave a message)

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