

THE 2008 AREA 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.

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 us 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) 471-4718, e-mail me at buzz.huber@athletics.utexas.edu or ask for me at The Erwin Center.

PARKING

This pamphlet is as close to chronological order as we can get, so lets start with the first and worst problem you'll have at The Erwin Center . . . parking.

State government parking lots and garages, several of which are near the Erwin Center, are open to the public after 6 p.m. Monday through Friday and all day on Saturday and Sunday. This works out great if your school's ceremony begins after 6:00 but is of no help at all if your school's ceremony is anytime before 6:00 p.m. on a weekDAY. You definitely do not want to park in any of the state garages before 6:00 p.m.

If your school commences on a weekDAY, your best options are the large lot just south of The Erwin Center (Lot 108) and any one of a number of U.T. parking garages. Your best options for parking may be the garages starting with the parking garage located across Red River Street from the Erwin Center at the intersection of M.L.K. and Trinity. There is also a parking garage located at the intersection of M.L.K. and Speedway, which is about two blocks from The Erwin Center as well as a parking garage at the intersection of Manor Road and Inner Campus Drive, across the street from the football stadium. All three are pay garages. All three will charge \$10.00. Money well spent for peace of mind when you're running late after having just negotiated your way through a massive traffic backup on I-35 and the area immediately around The Erwin Center.

Immediately south of The Erwin Center is Lot 108. It is available for parking on a first come, first served basis and there will be a charge of \$10.00 to park in this lot for the first time this year. Remember this: Unless your school's ceremony is the first one of the day, you'll be dealing with luck and timing as to whether or not you find a space. Spaces will not open up until after the previous school's ceremony is over. Attendants will have a fairly good idea of available spaces when you enter. Also, just a personal note: I drive a four door Nissan Titan. It's big and wide. This is not a friendly parking lot for large vehicles. Go for the surface lots north of the building and the garages.

Other lots include Lots 70 and 99 just south of Mike Meyers Soccer Stadium AND Lot 80 immediately north of The Erwin Center. All of these lots will charge \$10.00 a space.

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

Refer to the following schedule for start times and **approximate** end times on days when we have multiple ceremonies.

	Date & School	Doors Open	Begins	Ends @
Fri. 5/30	Westlake	7:30 p.m.	8:30 p.m.	N/A
Sat. 5/31	Round Rock	8:00 a.m.	9:00 a.m.	11:00 a.m.
	Stony Point	11:00 a.m.	12:00 p.m.	1:30 p.m.
	Westwood	2:00 p.m.	3:00 p.m.	5:15 p.m.
	McNeil	5:00 p.m.	6:00 p.m.	N/A
Thurs. 6/5	Akins	2:00 p.m.	3:00 p.m.	5:00 p.m.
	Anderson	4:45 p.m.	5:45 p.m.	7:15 p.m.
	Austin	7:30 p.m.	8:30 p.m.	N/A
Fri. 6/6	Leander	8:00 a.m.	9:00 a.m.	11:00 a.m.
	Bowie	11:00 a.m.	12:00 p.m.	2:00 p.m.
	Crockett	2:00 p.m.	3:00 p.m.	4:30 p.m.
	Lanier	4:45 p.m.	5:45 p.m.	N/A

Sat. 6/7	LBJ / LASA	8:00 a.m.	9:00 a.m.	10:30 a.m.
	McCallum	11:00 a.m.	12:00 p.m.	1:30 p.m.
	Travis	2:00 p.m.	3:00 p.m.	4:30 p.m.
	Pflugerville	4:45 p.m.	5:45 p.m.	7:15 p.m.
	Connally	7:30 p.m.	8:30 p.m.	N/A
Sun. 6/8	Cedar Park	2:00 p.m.	3:00 p.m.	5:00 p.m.
	Vista Ridge	5:00 p.m.	6:00 p.m.	N/A

Please remember these ending times are extremely approximate. Most of these times have been drawn from previous years and at this point, I have no idea of the size of each graduating class.

Generally speaking, U.T. Parking and Traffic officials are fairly lenient with cars not displaying proper credentials that are parked in University lots after classes are out, but illegally parked cars (double parked, parked in fire lanes, curb jumpers, etc.) will not be tolerated.

Of course, there is curbside parking on Red River outside the center but those spaces are usually gone by an hour before the first ceremony. If you are fortunate enough to find a space, don't forget you'll be "feeding the meter" until 5:00 p.m. on weekdays. There is no charge on the weekend. The parking meters on the street do not have to be "fed" if proper mobility impaired credentials are displayed.

In Lot 108 between The Erwin Center and Brackenridge Hospital, there are 29 spaces reserved for mobility impaired patrons. A credential will need to hang from the rear view mirror or be reflected on the license plate in order to park here. Please note that U.T. Parking and Traffic officials will make spot checks on these vehicles to ensure that the proper individual is parking there.

Access into the smaller lot on the north side of The Erwin Center by the flag poles is restricted to employees of that building until after 5:00 p.m.

Never park in the outside north or south bound lanes of Red River north of M.L.K. Those that do can be assured they will be ticketed. Never park on or alongside the feeder road east of the center. Those that do can be assured they will be towed.

Also, if you're coming in from out of town, shuttle service is available from many hotels/motels in the area and don't forget to carpool . . . carpool . . . carpool.

One other quick note: If you live in the Austin area, you already know the only sure things in life are death, taxes and construction / slow traffic / an accident on I-35. Leave early.

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 flag poles on the north side of the building. This is the easiest location to describe and see. Pick a flag and tell your party which flag you're under.

The mobility impaired entrance is on Red River Street. Mobility impaired guests can enter here or be dropped off and meet their parties after the vehicle is parked.

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.

Many people see the doors on Red River street as the main entrance to the building. You couldn't be more wrong during commencements. These doors are available only to graduates, faculty and mobility impaired. **All others must proceed up one level for building entrance.**

Please do not attempt to use these doors when you arrive. With as many as 700 graduates for some schools, this is an absolute nightmare of a location.

Also, parents and other family members tend to want to move to this area for admittance into the room where the graduates are cueing up for that cherished photo, to hand off a gift or to deliver a purse that's been left behind. Please refrain from doing this. You'll only be turned away at the door. In a best case scenario, you'll give us the needed item, such as a purse or what not, and we'll turn it over to school officials who'll in turn call the graduate up to the front of the room to retrieve said item.

If someone in your party is mobility impaired, they and your party are welcome to enter through these doors. There is a ramp available to your immediate right as you enter the 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. Once again, see the previous paragraph. Due to the heavy use of the elevator at load in, we ask that only the person who needs the elevator and one other use the elevator. The rest of the party can take the escalator up to the arena and wait for your party to emerge from the elevator. This helps tremendously in the speed of the line for the elevator.

No one is allowed down to the floor to view the ceremony. All mobility impaired seating is located on the back row of the arena level. 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. We ask the rest of the party to find seating in the immediate area.

All public entrances are accessed by taking the northwest ramp or southwest steps up from the street for admittance into any available doors. We encourage you to "blaze new trails" outside the building and enter through a lesser traveled door.

If you enter the building at any time within a half hour of the start of your ceremony, once inside the building, don't go in the first arena door you see. Walk around to the east side of the building denoted by Sections 33 – 38 for better and lower seats. Quite often, guests enter the building and settle for seats in row 32 when, if they walked around to the east side of the building, they could sit as low as row 10. We refer to this in the arena industry as "the lemming phenomenon" or "the follow the butt in front of you phenomenon".

One other note: As you can see from the schedule, the doors may open for some schools before the previous school is finished with their ceremony. We ask that you respect the previous school's wishes and be as quiet as possible if you decide to enter the seating area.

Once the previous school is finished with their ceremony, feel free to move down to better seats as they open up.

ITEMS YOU CAN'T BRING IN THE BUILDING

Due to the tragedies of September 11, we live in a new world, and security at venues such as The Erwin Center are of top priority.

EXPECT TO HAVE ANY PURSE OR HANDBAG VISUALLY INSPECTED AT THE DOORS. ANY ONE REFUSING THIS POLICY WILL NOT BE ALLOWED IN THE BUILDING.

As we say here at The Erwin Center, "Just come dressed".

We are now restricting entry to the items listed below. Please refrain from attempting to bring these into The Erwin Center.

1) Backpacks, knapsacks, large purses, coolers

These items are not allowed in under any circumstances. If you feel you can present a good enough reason to have them allowed in, tell an Usher Supervisor you would like to speak to Buzz and prepare to be disappointed. All of those items could be construed as being an obstruction in the event of an emergency egress.

2) Food or beverages

Due to contractual obligations, outside food and beverages will not be allowed inside. Concession stands will be 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.

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, including air horns. Commencement ceremonies are looked upon by the 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, INCLUDING AND ESPECIALLY AIR HORNS.**

5) Smoking

Smoking is not allowed inside any University of Texas building. Smoking is allowed outside.

6) Fireworks and/or weapons

No explanation necessary.

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, will meet you at the north end of the building by the flag poles. Some schools may be sponsoring a "Project Graduation" type activity after the ceremony and it's not unusual for schools to have these graduates board a bus immediately after the ceremony.

We ask that you move outside as quickly as possible to meet your graduate – if that's the case - 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

Photographs and videos are a major component of any commencement ceremony. Allow us to discuss a few points on these subjects.

Video cameras are perfectly acceptable in a commencement exercise. If you have a bag, it will be checked as you enter the building. 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.

The same search rules and tripod rules will apply to all photographers as well.

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

Cell phones have become an increasingly larger part of our everyday lives over the last 15 years. 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 phones ringing as the colors are being presented or an invocation is taking place. The only thing ruder would be forcing someone to have to listen to the conversation.

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, wheelchairs may be checked in for the mobility impaired and assistive listening devices for the hearing impaired may be checked out. In addition to assistive listening devices, there is a T.D.D. telephone available in the Reception office located on Red River.

If you made arrangements with your school to have a hearing impaired signer, you sit in the lower rows of Section 47.

Once again, welcome, Congratulations and please call me with any questions you may have.

Savor the moment.

Mike "Buzz" Huber

Events Manager

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

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