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, your first birdie putt or being a Houston Astros fan BEFORE everyone jumped on the band wagon. Your family member / friend has created a quintessential moment in their lifetime . . . and yours.

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 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 or (512) 748-4911, e-mail me at buzz@utexas.edu or ask for me at the Erwin Center.

PARKING

This pamphlet 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. Unfortunately, not even GPS will be of much assistance when in the immediate vicinity due to the detours you might experience.

Parking and general traffic maneuverability has been severely impacted for the last few years by the construction of the U.T. Dell Medical School. Phase 1 of that construction is thankfully over, 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.

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.

The Trinity parking garage is located across Red River Street from the Erwin Center at the intersection of M.L.K. and Trinity. 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.

The Health Center Garage is a new parking garage located at the intersection of Trinity and 15th. Turn right off 15th, pull in, park, take the sidewalk to Red River and you’re at the building.

There is also a parking garage located at the intersection of MLK and Speedway, which is about two blocks from the Erwin Center as well as the Manor garage on Dedman, which is also about two blocks from the Erwin Center. Both are long uphill walks to the Erwin Center.

A new parking garage is the East Campus Parking Garage in the U.F.C.U. Disch / Falk Field parking lot, located across the interstate from the Erwin Center. It might be a bit shorter of a walk and it’s definitely not uphill, but you’ll have to cross through five sets of stop lights on your trek to the building.

Parking WILL NOT be available in the ECG if a game is being played on Saturday, June 9th.
All of the aforementioned are pay garages and all will charge $12.00.

Other options for parking are the state garages along Trinity between 15th and M.L.K. 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. Due to the nefarious actions of some guests in the past, this lot isn’t available for drop offs unless the lot is full.

Your 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 after you’ve dropped your guest, your best choice will be to turn right on Red River, right on MLK, right on the I-35 southbound frontage road, right on 15th and turn right at the third light onto Trinity. Find the entrance to the HCG on your right, a state garage on your left or the U.T. Trinity garage at MLK / Trinity on your right.

If your mobility impaired guest can’t walk the 30 or 40 yards to the closest door, your next best option is to maneuver the nightmare that is Red River Street.

Red River between 15th and MLK is 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. You are urged to stay away from this street unless you have mobility impaired guests who can’t walk far or are in wheelchairs.

While we’re at it, if you’re on westbound 15th and don’t need to turn on Red River, stay in the inside lane until you’re past the “new” 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. If these end times are even close to correct, keep in mind that the traffic woes double as guests are exiting the area at the same time guests are arriving.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date &amp; School</th>
<th>Doors Open</th>
<th>Begins</th>
<th>Ends</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sat. June 9</td>
<td>Connally</td>
<td>8:30 a.m.</td>
<td>10:00 a.m.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Pflugerville</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>1:00 p.m.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Hendrickson</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>3:30 p.m.</td>
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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 two years ago as having the 4th worst traffic in the nation – we’ve since “improved” to the 10th 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 ride sharing companies. If you choose Uber, you’ll be notified of our clear bag policy before you. You’re your ride set up. More on that later. There are several smaller ride sharing companies. You can find them at http://austin.culturemap.com/news/innovation/06-03-16-ride-hailing-ridesharing-options-in-austin-transportation-network-companies-apps/
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 . . . unless you’re an Aggie or a Sooner.

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. This frees up the Red River doors for the public.

If someone in your party is mobility impaired, they and your party are welcome to enter through the Red River 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. 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 – or mezzanine - and wait for your party to emerge from the elevator. This helps tremendously in the speed of the line for the elevator.

The Erwin Center has ushers who will take your guest in a wheelchair to the mobility impaired sections. Please remember that due to the demographics of a high school commencement, there may be a lengthy wait for this service. Also, please remember that this is exactly what it was just called . . . a service. We’re not required to do this. Make this a non issue by your early arrival.

All mobility impaired seating is located on the back row of the arena level and the first row of the mezzanine 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 and the rest of the party find seating in the immediate area.

Public entrances are accessed by taking the northwest ramp – close to the MLK / Red River intersection – or the southwest steps - close to the 15th / Red River intersection - up from the street for admittance into any available doors. When you arrive at these terraces, it’s possible you’ll see an enormous amount of people trying to get in, since all foot traffic is being directed to these areas. Now is the time to blaze new trails. Walk around to any area of the building on this level, particularly the interstate side and go in any other door. 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 going through the mag. I suspect airhorns and other noisemakers will be setting them off as well. So, read #4 on the next page and don’t waste your money on an airhorn or other noisemakers.

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

Also, don’t carry the aforementioned offenders in your hand. All contents in your pockets need to go in the bowl at the magnetometer tables.

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) Any sized backpack or knapsack.
These items are not allowed in under any circumstances, as they could be construed as being an obstruction in the event of an emergency egress.

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 since they create a line of sight problem. Anything mounted on a stick is 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 about the magnetometers. Don’t waste your money.

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 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 / Car Seats / 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 strollers, car seats and / or 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.

And the faux permits people are buying online for their comfort animal trying to pass said comfort animal off as a service dog / animal, aren’t recognized either.

**THE CLEAR BAG POLICY**

If you read any part of this packet, **READ THIS PART.**

The Frank Erwin Center is now a clear bag venue. Only clear bags measuring no larger than 12” high x 12” long x 6” wide or a one gallon resealable plastic bag will be allowed in. Small clutch bags do not have to be clear but cannot exceed 4 ½” x 6 1/2”.

Prohibited bags include purses, diaper bags, cases of any kind, backpacks, fanny packs, printed pattern plastic bags, reusable grocery totes, mesh or straw bags, duffle bags and large totes. We can also throw what’s commonly referred to as “HEB bags” in here as well.

There will be an onsite business who’ll provide a locker – for a fee - for you to place your unclear bag in if you choose to do so. No, the Frank Erwin Center doesn’t make a dime for this service. Clear bags are provided at these lockers for essentials to go in. The non clear bag is then placed in the lockers by the owners of the non clear bag and retrieved after the ceremony. The non-clear bag CAN NOT be placed in the clear bag. Don’t laugh . . . you’d be amazed.
When you park and are walking to the Erwin Center, the neon shirted event staff you may see will have free clear bags for you. You’ll need to return to your car and empty the contents of your bag into the clear bag. Once again, don’t laugh . . . you’d be amazed.

Also, for those of you who think just hiding your bag somewhere on your person will work, think magnetometers.


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. Once again, big photo / selfie opportunity.

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

Photographs and 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. Any camera attachments / accessories will need to go in a clear bag. See “THE CLEAR BAG POLICY” above.

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 videographers and photographers record and take pictures from their seats. Please do not move to the floor as this only serves to disrupt the ceremony.

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. The only thing ruder would be forcing someone to have to listen to half 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 – usually cell phones - that were left behind at previous ceremonies, lost parents can be re-united with their children and assistive listening devices for the hearing impaired may 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 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 – who knows? – maybe anyone 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 – for someone. I get it. That comes with the territory. But when you start making 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 better answer than “They’re on the way” – of course they are, even if they’re in Round Rock, they’re on the 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 common courtesy and good judgement. You honestly can’t come up with a good enough excuse, so, please remember that as you hog row after row of prime seats for your tardy guests.

And let’s hope you don’t wind up in some viral video like the messy incident that many of us saw in Memphis, Tennessee . . . in a church . . . during a processional . . . all thanks to a seat saver hogging prime seats. Course, in their defense, it takes two to get to that shameful situation, but in the end, it’s the seat saver who needs to own it.

Please do the right things at these commencements and your day will be much brighter. 1) Arrive early 2) Don’t take Red River between 15th and MLK 3) Remember the clear bag policy 4) No comfort animals and 5) Don’t save bunches of prime seats.

Once again, welcome, Congratulations and please call me with any questions you may have. Please be aware that once these ceremonies begin, I won’t be at my office number very much at all, so please call / email days in advance rather than hours. And please don’t leave a voicemail on my office number. I admit it . . . I’m horrible about checking my office voice mail.

Savor the moment.

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