

EVENT: MavsMeet Convocation

DATE: Aug. 22, 2022

PRESIDENT'S ROLE: Remarks, moderate keynote address

Good evening, Mavericks! I am honored and delighted to welcome all of you to The University of Texas at Arlington.

I have a confession to make: Just like many of you, this is my first MavsMeet Convocation & AfterParty. The new Mavericks on campus this year are the first that I have the privilege of welcoming to the University, and I'm just as excited as you are to see what lies ahead. We are on this journey together.

We're both stepping into a new chapter—and a vibrant University—that's brimming with possibilities. For me, I'm navigating my new role as president of UTA. And you are making a commitment to your education, daring to hope for a better future for yourselves, your families, and your communities.

Arlington is home to me. I grew up here. When I was a teenager, I attended orchestra camp on campus and stayed in a UTA residence hall for a week. The lessons I learned at UTA as a child carried forward into my adulthood. This place helped to shape who I am today. My early experiences of connecting to this great university were so valuable, and I trust that yours will be as well.

Even more rewarding is the opportunity I have now to help shape the same kind of formative experiences for you. Whether you are a new student joining campus for the first time or a returning student continuing your education journey, I hope you feel at home here.

Your pursuit of a college degree requires self-motivation, discipline and endurance. Along the way, you will find a vast network of supporters at UTA, many of whom are here tonight. Please join me in expressing deep gratitude for everyone who has contributed to your success thus far: the Mav Elite tour guides, Maventure Camp leaders, orientation leaders, resident assistants, and last but not least, all our student leaders and mentors. We wouldn't be here without your help. Thank you.

This week, you all embark on a new year of learning, discovery and growth. I encourage you to meet as many of your fellow Mavericks as possible. Community and collaboration are invaluable assets on the road to success. As one of the most diverse institutions in the nation, UTA offers opportunities to engage with peers from a range of cultures and backgrounds. I encourage you to explore as much as possible and forge lasting friendships that will ultimately enhance your personal, academic, and career interests.

When you join the UTA community, you become a Maverick. Your curiosity will be key to your success. There are numerous resources, organizations, clubs, creative hubs and research laboratories where you can find a place to belong. You must seek them out and get involved. If you are interested in graphic design, there is a place for you. If you want to become a science teacher, there is a place for you. If your dream is to become a lawyer, there is a place for you. If you want to discover a cure for cancer, there is a place for you.

Our size is a strength. We have more than 180 degree programs, hundreds of student organizations and flexibility in how we offer courses. You can chart a path at UTA that works best for you.

Wherever your passion is leading you, there is a place for you at UTA. Your professors and mentors are dedicated to your development and success. All of us at UTA want to see you blossom into vibrant individuals who influence change in your communities and beyond.

I look forward to a great year and to witnessing all that you will accomplish. I hope to meet many of you at tonight's afterparty in the University Center. I look forward to the journey we're on together, and I'm so glad you chose to be a UTA Maverick. Thank you.

Now it's my honor to introduce you Payton (e-HEM-eh) Iheme, a UTA alumna who graduated with a Bachelor of Arts in communication in 2003. She now serves as the head of public policy at Bumble—an app I'm sure many of you here are familiar with.

Payton is an experienced global senior policy professional with a history of working in the technology industry, with nonprofits, and with senior federal government leadership. She is a testament to the power of a UTA education, having worked at the White House, U.S. embassies and for the Department of Defense. She has expertise in tech policy, business development, counter-terrorism, and STEM education advocacy, among other topics.

But before she worked in our nation's capital, Payton got her start as a student leader and residence assistant here at UTA. Please join me in welcoming her back to Maverick Country."