

**EVENT:** Spring 2023 commencement

**DATE:** Friday, May 12

**PRESIDENT'S ROLE:** Remarks, conferral of degrees

Though I won't be the first or the last person you hear it from today, let me start by saying: Congratulations, Mavericks! It is my honor to be here today as each of you embraces the goal you've been striving for as you officially join the ranks of our more than 250,000 esteemed Maverick alumni.

Graduation is always an exciting time, and when I reflect on my own college experience, I remember those professors who made me feel like I had unlimited potential, who encouraged my growth. And I remember the friends I made along the way. And I remember graduation. Because that day, like I'm sure it is for you today, was exciting. Graduating for me meant preparing to continue my education – preparing for graduate school. It also meant change – I had a chance to catch my breath for a bit before continuing on with graduate school. Change is a good thing, it brings about growth, knowledge, grace, and gratitude. And whether you are starting your career or preparing to continue your studies I know that you will forge ahead confidently on this new path.

And trust me when I say, change will happen. It's happening today, right before our very eyes. As you walk across this stage in just a few moments, you will no longer be UTA students, you'll be UTA graduates. And what you do with this change, is up to you. You have unlimited potential and an immense opportunity to make a difference, to leave this world better than you found it. And to do that, you must let your purpose drive you. I hope that you discovered your purpose at UTA, or are closer than when you arrived, and that you let us help you nurture it. Today though, this is your chance to go forth and continue toward that dream.

I had the great pleasure of meeting so many of our students at my investiture ceremony last fall. It was at that event that I put it to our UTA community that a dream without a plan, is just a wish. I know it to be true that this extends beyond our university, it's at the core of everything we seek to accomplish. And I'd like to build upon this idea, with a great quote from TV producer Shonda Rhimes, who went one step further. She says,

"Dreams are lovely. But they are just dreams. Fleeting, ephemeral, pretty. But dreams do not come true just because you dream them. It's hard work that makes things happen. It's hard work that creates change."

Mavericks, by definition, are strongly independent people. And it's true: the hundreds of you standing before me today represent hundreds of different paths to this moment. Each of you came to UTA from different places and points in your lives. And while you faced varied obstacles and learned your own individual lessons, you share a vital commonality: You're Mavericks who've demonstrated you have what it takes to earn a UTA degree.

You may not know the people sitting on either side of you, but because they're here with you, you know they're hardworking and resilient. You may have earned different degrees or are pursuing different career paths, but your potential for making an impact is the same – because that's what Mavericks do.

Our campus welcomes people from all corners of the world with different experiences and perspectives, and we're bonded by our commitment to dreaming big for the betterment of our communities and our people. It's my sincerest hope that each of you will carry forward this commitment to being a difference-maker with pride in your next chapter.

It's been one year that I have served as president of this wonderful university, and the spirit and passion of the Maverick community I've experienced in that time has me dreaming, planning, and working harder than ever. UTA is already a world-class university, but our collective future is brimming with possibilities that can take us to new heights – much like each of you. You are magnificent for what you've already achieved, and there is no shortage of possibilities on your horizon. The same persistence and resilience that brought you to this moment – now fortified by your UTA degree – make you more than capable of taking each possibility and turning it into reality.

Though I came in near the end of your journey here at UTA as students, I'm excited to follow your futures as UTA alumni and see what the future of our University, state, nation, and beyond looks like with you leading the way. As you embark on this new chapter, please stay in touch. Come back and see us sometime and connect with our office of Development and Alumni Relations. An active and engaged community of dedicated alumni opens doors for all of us.

Now, please stand for the conferral of your degrees.

What I'm about to say may sound like complicated legalese, but they're the words that make the degree you've been working for officially yours and open up the path you're eager to embark upon. Let's make you proud members of the Maverick alumni family, shall we?

By virtue of the authority vested by law in the Board of Regents of The University of Texas System, and delegated to The University of Texas at Arlington, I hereby confer upon each of you the respective academic degree for which you have been recommended, with all rights, privileges, responsibilities, and obligations pertaining thereto.

Honored guests and members of the faculty...please join me in congratulating our newest graduates. Congratulations and well done!