



2017 Commencement Ceremonies Frequently Asked Questions

Updated: May 11, 2017

PARKING AND SHUTTLES– Updated May 11, 2017: Please note changes, as only a limited number of pre-paid parking passes will be available.

SHUTTLE BUSES: Parents will be able to park for free at their student's home campus and ride an FBISD bus to the graduation ceremony at the Smart Financial Centre. The buses will also bring you back after the ceremony. If you plan to ride the shuttle bus, you need to fill out the section for this service on the online ticket ordering form. (*Students will be riding a bus from the school separately and will receive more information about those details from their campus.*)

PARKING UPDATE, MAY 11, 2017

Fort Bend ISD has been actively working with the City of Sugar Land and the Smart Financial Centre to ensure that our attendees get in and out of the facility in a timely manner and avoid traffic issues in and around the venue.

Please note the following two options for our parents and guests:

- **Option 1 (Recommended):** To avoid any unnecessary delays due to heavy traffic, families are highly encouraged to take advantage of the **free, air-conditioned shuttle service** from the campuses. Fort Bend ISD will be reopening the Skyward Family Access reservation form through May 21, 2017 so that families can reserve seats on the complimentary shuttle service.
- **Option 2 (Limited, Pre-Paid Parking):** Based on recommendations from Sugar Land PD, the Smart Financial Centre, and FBISD, the decision has been made to pre-sell \$10 parking permits prior to the event, and to limit the sale of these permits to two (2) per graduate. Details about the purchasing process are below.

Additional Parking Permit Information:

- **In order to purchase pre-paid parking, families will need visit links provided by their campus and enter their graduate's student ID to complete the transaction by May 21, 2017.** The "hangtag" permits will be distributed to students by their campus with distribution details to come. Note: The receipt provided through Ticketmaster is NOT a parking permit. The colors of the physical "hangtag" permits will be different for each FBISD school, and each campus will use a unique link provided by the SFC and Ticketmaster.
- **Handicap access to the venue:** Please note that all shuttles will be dropping off guests at the door of the venue, which is closer than the designated handicap parking spaces. Shuttles will be able to accommodate guests who require wheelchair or other mobility assistance, and families are encouraged to reserve seats on designated shuttles. Families who park at the venue will need a pre-paid parking permit and a handicap placard.

Parents/family members may also Uber to the venue.

Why did Fort Bend ISD move its 2017 graduation ceremonies to the Smart Financial Centre?

- Due to changes to extend the National Basketball Association's schedule, the Toyota Center may not always be available for future graduation ceremonies in the timeframe that Fort Bend ISD needs for graduation ceremonies to be held. We have had to change the date of our graduation ceremonies in the past due to an NBA lockout and are always on standby when the Rockets have playoff games.
- The District is very limited in the available indoor venues for graduation. To that end, the Smart Financial Centre in Sugar Land, which opened in December 2016, provides a new, convenient entertainment venue for the 2016-17 Graduation Ceremonies, and is located within the Fort Bend ISD attendance boundaries.
- The indoor seating capacity for the venue is approximately 6,250. Last year, close to 57,000 family members and friends were able to attend the ceremonies and participate as more than 5,400 graduates receive their diplomas. The attendance ranged from 3,200 to a little more than 6,000 per ceremony, so we are confident that parents and students will enjoy a large venue that is close to home.

How do I get to the Smart Financial Centre?

The Smart Financial Centre at Sugar Land is located at 18111 Lexington Blvd in Sugar Land.

DRIVING DIRECTIONS

From Richmond/Rosenberg: Take I-69 (US 59) North towards Sugar Land. Exit University Blvd and continue on the feeder road. Turn right onto Taborwood.

From Houston: Take I-69 (US 59) South towards Sugar Land. Exit University Blvd. Make the U-Turn. Continue on the feeder road and turn right onto Taborwood.

Do guests need tickets?

- In discussions with the Smart Financial Centre operators, we developed a plan to issue tickets to the families of the graduates planning to attend the ceremonies. The tickets will help ensure there is seating capacity for each family for each of the graduation ceremonies. Also, another reason to issue tickets is that we may have increased attendance due to the close proximity of the new venue.
- To ensure there is maximum seating capacity for all of the families with graduating seniors, Fort Bend ISD is using a similar ticketing process that other school districts, like Katy ISD and Cypress-Fairbanks ISD, have used successfully. Katy ISD provides 8 or 10 guaranteed tickets for families depending upon the size of the graduating class, and CFISD provides 8 tickets for families.
- In making our plans for the 2017 high school graduations, Fort Bend ISD staff members and principals have been working with some of the same experienced staff members who coordinated past FBISD graduations in the former Compaq Center and the Toyota Center.

- Based on prior experience with opening new venues, the Smart Financial Operations Director advised the District to use a guaranteed ticketing process because we could have more in attendance than in previous years due to the convenient location.

TICKETING PROCESS – April 3-21, 2017

How do I reserve tickets?

- Beginning on **Monday, April 3**, parents may log on to the parent's Skyward/Family Access account and request the number of tickets the family will need. Using Skyward ensures a reliable and accurate way of processing tickets. *(If you need assistance with Skyward, please contact your student's high school campus.)*
- Graduating seniors do not require a ticket, so do not count them when ordering tickets.
- Tickets are required for everyone over the age of two (2).
- If you need additional tickets beyond the allotted number, you may request more on the form and be placed on a waiting list.
- You may make changes online to your request through **Friday, April 21**.
- After the requested tickets have been fulfilled for the graduating class, any tickets not claimed will be redistributed to those on the waiting list. Seniors will be notified of the additional tickets allotted to them on **Friday, May 5**. Every effort will be made to accommodate requests.
- NOTE: Requesting additional tickets does not guarantee that you will receive more than the allotted number.
- **KEEP TICKETS IN SAFE PLACE** – There will be no replacement tickets issued. You will not be able to enter the Smart Financial Centre without a ticket, so be sure to keep the graduation tickets in a secure place.

NOTE: **LIVE STREAMING** – the graduation ceremonies are also available for viewing via live streaming on YouTube for those in the military service or for family members who are not physically able to attend the graduation ceremonies. Links will be provided closer to the dates of graduation via email and publicized on the website.

When are the graduation ceremonies?

Friday, June 2

9:00 a.m.	Austin
11:30 a.m.	Dulles
2:00 p.m.	Travis
4:30 p.m.	Ridge Point
7:00 p.m.	Bush

Saturday, June 3

8:00 a.m.	Elkins
10:30 a.m.	Hightower
1:00 p.m.	Marshall
3:30 p.m.	Kempner
6:00 p.m.	Clements
8:15 p.m.	Willowridge

What time do graduates need to arrive?

Graduates will need to arrive at their high school campus **two (2) hours** prior the scheduled start time of their commencement ceremony.

Where do graduates need to gather?

Graduates will need to gather at their high schools and will then be given instructions about getting into the correct order, etc., before departing for the Smart Financial Centre on air-conditioned buses.

How long does the ceremony typically last?

Each ceremony typically lasts approximately one hour and 30 minutes.

When should parents/family members arrive for their student's graduation ceremony?

The doors for each ceremony do not open for the next group's parents/family members until the arena is empty and cleaned, and a security check is performed. Please **arrive 30 minutes prior** to your student's ceremony to reduce wait times. Each guest will have to pass through metal detectors, and all handbags and purses are subject to search.

Is there reserved seating at the Smart Financial Centre?

There is no reserved seating. All seating is open, except for those who need special accommodations for wheelchairs, etc.

When do students get their diplomas?

At the commencement ceremony, students will receive a diploma cover, but their actual diplomas will arrive later to the school. Each high school campus will send out information to parents and students regarding when the diplomas will be available for pick up at the campus. Typically, this occurs later in June or July.

Photography and Video Services:

Parents may bring cameras and video cameras, but no tripods are allowed to be set up in any areas.

Marc Nathan Photographers, Inc. will be capturing your senior's 2017 Commencement. Every graduate will be photographed as they receive their diploma and as they exit the stage. An email will be sent to your senior 7-10 days after the commencement with a link to order prints. There is no obligation to order. If you have any questions or don't receive something via email or regular mail, please email me at grads@mnathanphoto.com or call (281)549-2367. The website to view the images is www.gradphotonetwork.com.

Are balloons, air horns, banners and flowers allowed?

Balloons, air horns, and banners are **not allowed** in the venue. Flowers may be brought in or purchased in the lobby of the Centre.

Will concessions/refreshments be available?

The Smart Financial Centre will not be selling concessions.

For additional questions you may have, please contact your high school directly.

