One Take, No Rehearsal: Memories of Graduations’ Past

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Over the last fifty years, The University of Akron has used different venues for commencement as needs and presidents have changed. Commencement and convocation ceremonies were held in Memorial Hall through 1971, when commencement was taken to Blossom Music Center (1972–1976), then the Richfield Coliseum (1977–1987). President Bill Muse, University of Akron’s twelfth president, brought commencement back to campus, staging it in the James A. Rhodes Arena (1988–1998). President Peggy Gordon Elliott, the thirteenth University of Akron president, first tried E.J.
Thomas Performing Arts Hall for the smaller summer ceremonies in 1994 and 1995. The fifteenth University of Akron president, Luis Proenza, moved all ceremonies to E.J. Thomas in 1999, which made necessary hosting several ceremonies to accommodate the many graduates. In 2018, there were a total of eleven: six in May, two in August, and three in December. The School of Law holds its event separately. The University is proud of its over 174,000 graduates, earning more than 211,000 degrees from 1970 to 2020.