

## Muster 2024 Sample Speech

*\*These sample remarks are provided to help you, as a Muster Speaker, prepare your own remarks. We encourage you to take the messages outlined in this document, put them in your own words, and incorporate your own stories to support the messages.*

Howdy! It's great to be with you here in \_\_\_\_\_ as we gather for this unique and most cherished of Aggie traditions. Your presence here tonight demonstrates your commitment to both Texas A&M and to your fellow Aggies.

As we enjoy this time of Aggie camaraderie, I would like to thank those who made this evening possible:

\_\_\_\_\_, Class of \_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_ A&M Club Muster Chair;  
\_\_\_\_\_, Class of \_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_ A&M Club President.

*(Add anyone else who should be thanked.)*

I also thank the many, many people who work so hard behind the scenes to make an event like this possible.

This evening, Aggies gather in hundreds of locations around the world. Each gathering will be as unique as the 593,000 former students of Texas A&M; but each gathering will share a common Spirit and common themes of remembrance, respect and renewal.

Tonight, Aggies will share “good bull” and swap “Ol’ Army” stories. We’ll compare notes on how much the campus has grown and changed over the years. Yet we will leave here knowing the Aggie Spirit remains the same – because it was not the buildings, but our fellow Aggies and our shared experiences at Texas A&M that made such a difference in our lives.

These shared experiences include saying “Howdy” to Aggies and non-Aggies alike; standing together as part of the 12<sup>th</sup> Man; gathering on a quiet and darkened campus for Silver Taps; and answering “Here!” for a departed friend at Aggie Muster. We gather this evening and reflect on those and countless other experiences.

**I especially reflect on my own meaningful Aggie experiences, including:**

*(You can personalize with some of your own Aggie experiences, such as favorite traditions, important lessons learned at A&M, influential Aggies in your life, or similar.)*

So much has changed at A&M, but as we gather tonight, we are both respectful of the storied past of our alma mater, and grateful for its remarkable rise from a few buildings on a bald prairie to one of the nation's largest and most respected institutions of higher education.

We are grateful to the people who persevered through times of adversity and times of struggle, to leave us a Texas A&M that is, in the words of former University President Dr. Robert Gates, a “*unique* American institution.”

Tonight, we acknowledge all those decades of growth and positive change, while we celebrate all that remains constant about Texas A&M – the friendliness of our students; our commitment to Texas A&M's core values of excellence, integrity, leadership, loyalty, respect, and selfless service; the enthusiastic passion found within our students and former students; our uncommon loyalty to our alma mater and to our fellow Texas Aggies; and most of all, that incomparable and unconquerable Aggie Spirit.

Tonight, we will call a roll of Aggies who are no longer among us, and we will answer for each of them. We will remember and respect those who have departed and stand in support of those left behind.

Earlier today, The Association of Former Students led a roll call in the Clayton W. Williams, Jr. Alumni Center. Volunteers representing current and former students, Texas A&M faculty, staff and administration called every name on our worldwide Muster Roll and answered “Here!” for each and every one. That roll call began at sunrise in Aggieland and included the names of about 1,400 Aggies. It lasted more than two and a half hours.

The Association of Former Students does that roll call every year — to ensure that every Aggie is remembered at a Muster... As they should be, and as they must be.

Among the names called were those of:

- Chace Murphy, Class of 1998, the “voice of Aggie football” and men's basketball from 2001 to 2016, known for his signature call of “another Fightin' Texas Aggie first down.”

- Pauline Dominey, Class of 1975, who entered Texas A&M when few women attended the once all-male school to receive degrees in chemistry and zoology and launch a career as a scientist. She was the first in her family to graduate college – but not the last.
- Brigadier General Thomas G. Smith, Class of 2001, a veteran of the Korea, Vietnam and Cold Wars and Purple Heart recipient who, nearly 20 years after his retirement from the U.S. Army, enrolled at Texas A&M at the age of 70 to earn a master’s degree.
- And 14 currently enrolled Texas A&M students we lost in the past year.

*(You may wish to personalize the above list with the names of Aggies lost this year who were important to you or relevant to the place you are speaking.)*

As we gather tonight to remember these Aggies and so many others, we are joined by fellow Aggies around the world, including those gathering in Reed Arena for the Campus Muster, where Major General Tim Green, Class of 1986, is the keynote speaker. Joining him there will be members of the Class of 1974, commemorating their 50<sup>th</sup> year since graduating from Texas A&M.

Although the Spirit is the same, Texas A&M today looks vastly different than the relatively small university the Class of 1974 attended five decades ago. Today, Texas A&M ranks among the nation’s largest universities with a Fall 2023 enrollment of over 77,000 students, including those at our School of Law, the Health Science Center, and at branch campuses in Galveston, McAllen and Qatar. With more than \$1.3 billion invested in research annually, Texas A&M is number one among Texas public and private schools in total research expenditures.

Texas A&M has long been known as a school that proudly welcomes veterans. It’s the reason so many Aggies, including some being called today, chose to use their G.I. Bill at Texas A&M after serving in our nation’s armed forces. Today, it is ranked number one nationally for service to veterans transitioning into civilian careers after military service and is considered the best value nationally for veterans.

It is ranked number one nationally among public and private universities for producing CEOs for Fortune 500 companies.

Students are attracted to Texas A&M for many reasons, including its outstanding academics, timeless values, and a wide variety of student organizations. Students

today can select from more than 1,300 student involvement opportunities, including social, religious, and service organizations.

Through these organizations, students learn, build networks and lead. These extracurriculars are an essential component of “the other education” we Aggies hold so dear.

Service organizations like the Big Event showcase Texas A&M’s core value of selfless service and are now emulated on campuses across the country. Last month, tens of thousands of Aggies participated in Big Event, completing more than 2,200 service projects in the Bryan-College Station area in a single day. This effort is being continued by former students, as many of our A&M Clubs engage in service projects in their own communities.

Student leadership and involvement opportunities have been a mainstay of the Aggie experience since the early days of Texas A&M, with the oldest and most recognizable of these groups being the 2,300-strong Corps of Cadets. The Corps continues to provide tangible development and leadership opportunities for cadets as they prepare for careers in the military and private sectors. Each year 30 to 40 percent of our cadets will pursue a military commission, continuing Texas A&M’s tradition of providing more commissioned officers to our nation’s armed forces than any institution other than the service academies.

Special units such as the Fish Drill Team, Ross Volunteers and Parsons Mounted Cavalry represent Texas A&M and the Corps in events around the country and continue to garner attention for their precision and impressive presentation. The Corps of Cadets represents our oldest student organization and the origin of most of our traditions.

Yet, within the arches we also see a spirit of renewal, an appreciation of the past with a focus on the future. That sense of optimism for the future of Texas A&M can be found throughout our campus and reminds us that the best is yet to come for our alma mater.

When we consider how great our first 148 years have been, it’s quite exciting to think of even better times ahead. With the passage of time, some of our traditions may be carried out in slightly different ways, but our undying Aggie Spirit will remain unchanged and will continue to burn brightly. We are known for our many traditions, but more importantly, for what they represent.

Tonight, we celebrate what is enduring, and what is true, about the Aggie Spirit.

And what is true, more than anything else, is that no matter where you are around the world, your fellow Aggies are there for you.

*“We are the Aggies, the Aggies are we. True to each other, as Aggies can be.”*

Every Muster ceremony is different. A Muster gathering can be one filled with celebration and joy, or one filled with quiet remembrance and tears. Aggies gather in the grandeur of ballrooms, in the comfort of homes, and under the shadow of conflict. Today, Aggies are gathered in restaurants and bars, on ships and military bases, in kitchens and on porches.

It matters not *where* we gather tonight — nor does it matter how many gather with us. We gather in groups large and small. We gather as old friends — the ones we’ve known for years, and the ones we’ve just met. We represent all ages, all class years, every state of the Union and nearly every country on earth.

Tonight, whatever road brought us here, whatever our differences, we unite as one people, singing together *“The Spirit of Aggieland”* and remembering the love we have for Texas A&M and the love we have for our fellow Texas Aggies.

Muster is a rekindling of the Aggie Spirit. It reminds us that we are a part of something bigger than ourselves. May tonight’s Muster fuel each of us to carry the Aggie Spirit throughout the next year. May it inspire us to keep warm in our hearts our affection for each other and for Texas A&M.

And now, we will do as Dr. John Ashton, Class of 1906, instructed us in the poem he wrote in 1943, “Roll Call for the Absent.”

He wrote:

*Softly call the muster,  
Let comrade answer, “Here!”*

We will answer — just as those for whom we will answer did for their forebears. We will answer for relatives, for classmates, for colleagues, and for some with whom we share only the bond of being Texas Aggies.

Dr. Ashton also wrote, in the same poem,

*Mark them “present” in our hearts,  
We’ll meet some other day.*

Among the countless ways in which we are blessed to be Texas Aggies is the comfort of knowing that someday, somewhere, Aggies will mark **us** present in their hearts, and someone will answer “**HERE**” for us at **our** journey’s end. That is the sacred promise of Aggie Muster.

I thank you all for gathering this evening in remembrance and fellowship as we keep that promise to those fellow Aggies we have lost. It has been my great honor and privilege to speak to you and to be present with you for this Muster.

Thank you, and gig ’em!