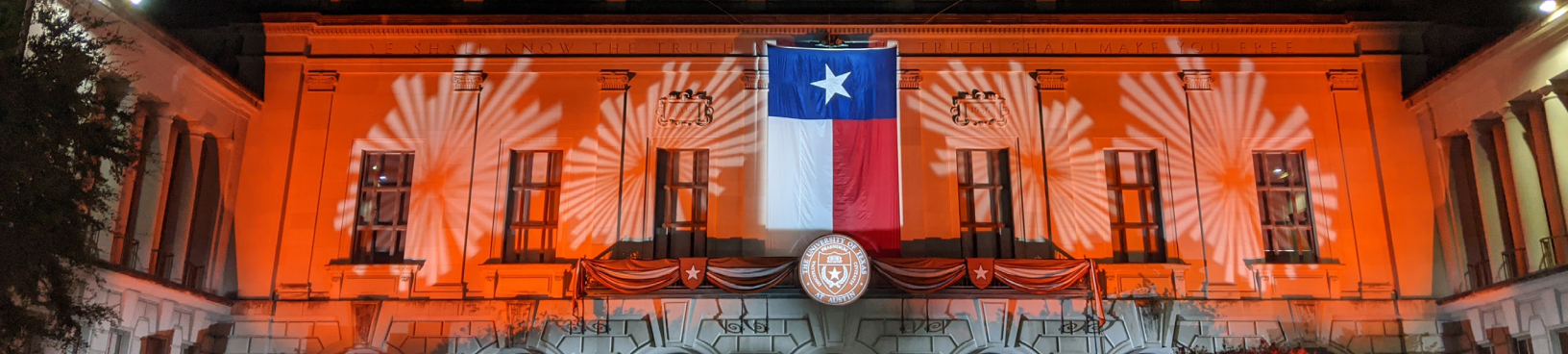


# VARI\*LITE

## UT AUSTIN MARKS 'GONE TO TEXAS' COMMENCEMENT CELEBRATION WITH VARI-LITE



**Austin, USA** - As one of the USA's most prestigious research and learning establishments, the University of Texas at Austin has accumulated a wealth of academic laurels in its almost 140-year history. For many decades, key moments in that history have been marked by an architectural lighting scheme, and this year, the Vari-Lite range of luminaires was called upon by long-serving local lighting specialist, Olden Lighting, to deliver that highly visible touch of UT Austin branding.

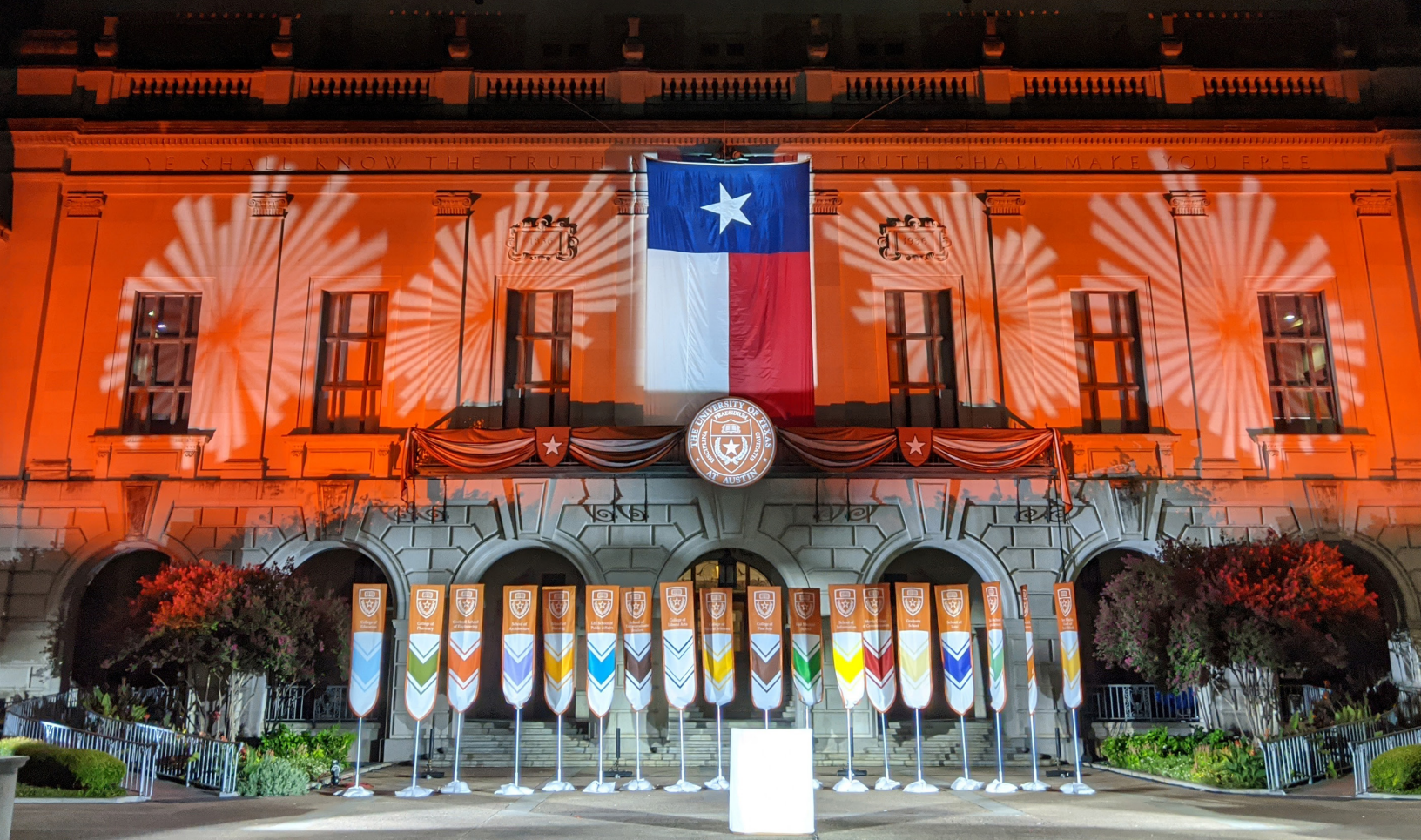
The impressive façade of the University's iconic main building is dominated by the 27-storey UT Tower, one of the most recognizable symbols of the Austin cityscape. Constructed in the 1930s, the tower was designed from the outset with the power of lighting in mind. Its commanding architecture would mark significant events in the life of the University - commencements, graduations, sporting successes, and even memorial occasions. So important is the building's appearance, that a strict code of lighting rules has been in place, with some evolution, since 1947.

For the Olden Lighting team, led by Walter Olden, the UT Tower has long been a familiar challenge, one that remains governed by color, punch, position, and power draw. And like all lighting professionals, Walter Olden and his team are always looking for better and brighter ways to achieve the desired vision.

Each year, UT celebrates the Gone to Texas event. The phrase, which comes from the practice of early 19th century migrants writing those words on the doors of abandoned houses as they headed west, was adopted by the University to celebrate the commencement of its new student intake. Gone to Texas is one of the celebratory events for which the UT Tower and main building façade are lit in the University's trademark burnt orange.







“We have worked with the University on fixture placement and design ideas all along,” says Walter Olden, a renowned lighting designer whose work has included countless live broadcast shows for the prestigious Austin City Limits and SXSW festivals. “The biggest challenge is finding a location with power to effectively light the specific areas. And the required throw distance varies from around 50ft to 250ft. So the most important attributes we look for in our fixture choices are punch, size of fixture, power usage, and durability.”

For this year’s Gone to Texas celebration, Olden decided to try out some of the newest high-performance lighting fixtures from Dallas-based manufacturer Vari-Lite. Having used the powerful, effects-rich VL10 BEAMWASH and the compact, LED-based VL2600 WASH and PROFILE fixtures on other recent projects, he was confident they would meet every one of his priorities for this task. To effectively cover the familiar façade, he specified eight VL10 BEAMWASH, plus eight VL2600 WASH and fourteen VL2600 PROFILE.

“The VL10s we chose because of their punch,” he says. “We’ve used them in long-throw applications in live events and television projects in the past and the amount of punch they can deliver over that kind of throw distance is a real benefit for a scheme like this.”

Olden had previously used the VL2600 WASH and PROFILE fixtures on the University’s iconic architecture when his company provided the illumination for UT Austin’s graduation ceremony in May 2020 – a ceremony which, due to COVID-19 restrictions, had to be a ‘virtual’ event. “Both the VL2600 WASH and the PROFILE fixtures have great punch for their size,” he says, echoing the

sentiments of many lighting designers who have been impressed by the output and quality of light produced by these relatively compact fixtures. “The VL2600 PROFILE’S framing shutters were particularly useful in keeping the light on the building where we wanted it.”

One legacy Vari-Lite fixture from Olden Lighting’s stock was also used for this scheme – a single VL3015 SPOT. This powerful 1500W fixture had previously been used to project a gobo image of a longhorn cattle head - symbol of the UT Austin’s football team, the Longhorns - onto the UT Tower, so the gobo was ready and waiting to be called into action again.

Olden concludes, “We have used many combinations of different lighting fixtures over the years, but we certainly got more punch with this combination of lights. The client was very happy with the result.” ■

**PRODUCTS FEATURED:**

- VL10 BEAMWASH
- VL2600 WASH
- VL2600 PROFILE

PHOTO CREDITS: © Kevin Richie, Olden Lighting

LIGHTING DESIGNER: Walter Olden, Olden Lighting

LIGHTING APPLICATION: EDUCATION