

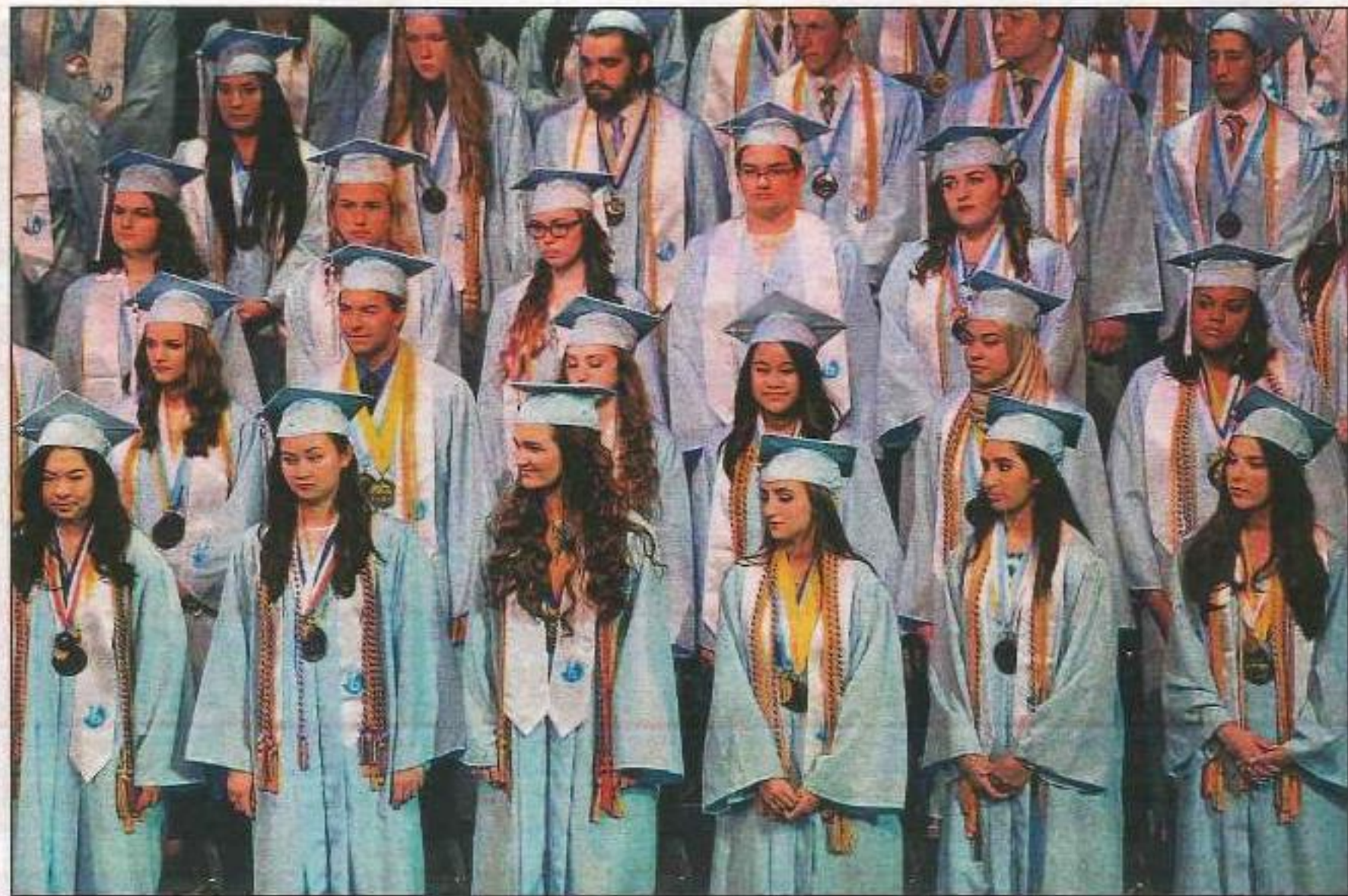


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Graduates of the Utica Academy for International Studies stand during their June 7 graduation ceremony, which was held at Henry Ford II High School in Sterling Heights.

Photo by Sean Work



Students, schools celebrate graduation

BY ERIC CZARNIK

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UTICA — Thousands of graduating seniors from the Utica Community Schools district have been deemed ready to face a future of higher education or careers upon earning their diplomas.

UCS high schoolers were scheduled to celebrate their graduations during June commencement cer-

emonies, including those for the four main high schools June 11.

According to school district spokesman Tim McAvoy, a total of 2,214 students graduated from Utica High, Henry Ford II, Stevenson and Eisenhower high schools, as well as the Utica Academy for International Studies and the district's alternative learning and adult education programs. The district collectively hon-

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ored 192 valedictorians and 16 salutatorians, he said.

Eisenhower High School Principal Nanette Chesney described her school's 2016 graduating class as academically focused and "an amazing group of students." She said her school's graduating class, estimated at 635 students, included 60 valedictorians who earned a 4.0 or higher grade point average. In addition, the Eisenhower graduating class includes six salutatorians with 3.99 GPAs, she said.

"We have 171 seniors in our National Honor Society; 254 seniors have a GPA of a 3.5 or higher," she added.

Chesney said students also contributed to award-winning band and choir groups and athletic teams. She said she wishes she could tell the story of every student in the class.

"They are truly nice kids, which is really saying something today, because you don't always hear those stories these days," she said. "I know these kids will do great things in the future."

Justin Roy Walters, a Ford graduating senior, said he looks



Graduates throw their mortarboards into the air.

Photo by Sean Work

forward to giving a speech at his graduation ceremony. He said he plans to attend Eastern Michigan University to major in marketing and business while on a full-ride scholarship. He said the financial aid "takes a lot of stress off of me and my family."

"I'll really remember (having) a strong group of friends and a helpful community of teachers," he said. "It's really comforting to know I have a group of people who

helped do what they could to get me through high school."

According to McAvoy, the UCS graduates are expected to continue their educations, either in or out of state, at almost 200 colleges and universities.

Learn more about Utica Community Schools by visiting www.uticak12.org or by calling (586) 797-1000.

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