

Honorary Degree Nominee

August 21, 2025

Ambassador Tilman J. Fertitta

Ambassador Tilman J. Fertitta is a highly accomplished entrepreneur, philanthropist, and civic leader whose influence spans hospitality, sports, media, and public service. As the sole owner of Fertitta Entertainment, he leads a vast portfolio that includes Landry's, Inc.—with over 600 restaurant and hospitality locations globally—and the Golden Nugget Casinos. He also owns luxury properties such as Montage Laguna Beach and The Post Oak Hotel, Texas's only Forbes Five-Star hotel and spa. Fertitta holds a 12.3% stake in Wynn Resorts, further solidifying his role as a major figure in the global gaming and luxury hospitality industry.

In 2017, Fertitta made headlines with the record-setting purchase of the NBA's Houston Rockets, reinforcing his deep ties to his hometown. He also gained national recognition as the host of CNBC's *Billion Dollar Buyer*, where he mentored aspiring entrepreneurs. Often referred to as "the world's richest restaurateur," he has been a regular on the Forbes 400 list and is widely recognized for his business acumen. His numerous accolades include Entrepreneur of the Year from Ernst & Young and induction into the Texas Business Hall of Fame.

Fertitta is a passionate advocate for education and civic progress. He served as Chairman of the University of Houston System Board of Regents and made landmark philanthropic contributions, including \$20 million to renovate the Fertitta Center and \$50 million to create the Tilman J. Fertitta Family College of Medicine. In 2025, he was appointed U.S. Ambassador to Italy, reflecting his commitment to diplomacy and global engagement. The University of Houston awarded him an honorary doctorate in recognition of his leadership, innovation, and lifelong service to the community.