The quality of RPTS students’ education is a result of many types of contributions. Members of our educational team include not only faculty and staff but also donors, advisory committee members, guest speakers, industry leaders, intern supervisors, employers, community partners, and others.

This year, the RPTS Department celebrates 50 years of educating students at Texas A&M University. Please join our team by supporting this Department’s amazing accomplishments in the fields of recreation, parks and tourism!

Your contributions will benefit present and future Aggies. Donors, welcome to our educational team! Our Department Head, Dr. Gary Ellis (gellis1@tamu.edu; 979-845-7324) will be happy to speak with you about gifts or any other matters of interest.

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In February, our student leadership organization, the Aggie Reps, hosted the largest career fair in the history of the Department. Recruiters from forty-five employers filled the booths. Employers represented opportunities in youth organizations, cruise lines, parks and recreation agencies, tourism, hospitality, and destination marketing. Thirteen Aggie Reps assisted with implementation of event, and well over 200 students attended. Gold Sponsors were Pine Cove, Marriott Corporation, City of College Station Parks and Recreation, La Torretta Lake Resort and Spa, City of Mont Belvieu, Panda Restaurant Group, Inc., City of Conroe Parks and Recreation, Carnival Cruise Lines, T.F. Harper and Associates, Second Baptist Church, Austin Parks and Recreation, Horseshoe Bay Resort. An impressive number of RPTS students received internships through organizations represented at event. Our faculty coordinator of the Aggie Reps is our Associate Department Head for Undergraduate Programs, Mrs. Susan Scott.

The next bend in the flume that was our spring semester was a very exciting event coordinated between the Department of RPTS and the National Park Service. Professor Jim Gramann worked closely with National Park Service colleagues and RPTS Adjunct Professors Jim Miculka, Giselle Mora-Bourgeois, and Lavell Merritt to organize a “National Park Service Directors Forum.” The Forum brought two former National Park Service Directors, a leading National Park superintendent, and a youth ambassador from Texas Parks and Wildlife to our AGLS building for presentations and discussions with students and faculty. The distinguished panel included for NPS Directors Robert Stanton and Fran Maniella, NPS Superintendent Kevin Chere, and Ambassador Annie Armstrong.

If the Spring Semester of Academic Year 2016 was an attraction at Walt Disney World’s Magic Kingdom, it would be “Splash Mountain.” Disney’s website describes Splash Mountain as:

“a rollicking log flume ride featuring characters and songs from the classic Disney film, Song of the South. Guests enjoy a highly memorable ride aboard a log flume. The winding path of the flume features rocky caves, swamps, and briar patches. Along the way, guests enjoy visits with iconic figures such as Br’er Bear and Br’er Fox. They witness unlikely alliances, such as a frog and alligator enjoying one another’s company at a fish pond. A little blue bird greets visitors with classic Southern hospitality. The log flume ride culminates with a five-story splashdown, magically captured by Disney through creative photography.”

As an aside, our students may know that Disney’s Magic Kingdom ordinarily ranks about sixth in demand among top US tourist attractions, at over 17,000,000 visitors per year.

The semester that is our log flume ride began with a series of very exciting high-impact learning experiences. Drs. Gerard Kyle and Mike Schuett taught a Wintermester version of their study-abroad class in New Zealand. Students studied human dimensions of natural resource management in some of the world’s most unique and exciting locations. Also during the Wintermester, Professor of the Practice Rick Harwell engaged students in new high-impact learning class. Students learned career opportunities and challenges of managing Morale, Welfare, and Recreation facilities and programs for branches of the United States armed forces. Students studied at MWR sites throughout Texas and met top MWR managers and officers in different branches of the armed forces.

Professor Gerard Kyle also took park management students to the Great Smokey Mountain Outdoor Recreation Consortium. Aggies studied with park managers and students from five other universities for one week in the United States’ most heavily visited national park.

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The next stop on the RPTS log flume ride was a very memorable breakfast with parents of RPTS students on Texas A&M University’s Parents’ Weekend. Industry leaders, academic advisors, and faculty described the vast opportunities awaiting RPTS students who seek careers in the experience industries (i.e., parks, recreation, tourism). Our distinguished speakers were Mr. Hunter Goodwin (Oldham-Goodwin Group), Mr. David Schmitz (Director, College Station Parks and Recreation), Mr. Steven Migacz (restaurant owner), Dr. Lavell Merritt (National Park Service ProRanger Program Coordinator), and Mrs. Debe Shafer (Lecturer and International Event Management Diploma-holder).

Another bend in the flume landed those along for the ride at the 2nd Annual “Kitefest.” Kitefest is a community festival. It celebrates the love of simple play and the arrival of spring. The event is planned and conducted in collaboration with the College Station Parks and Recreation Department. Dr. Jinmoo Heo and his RPTS 321 students are the heart and soul of planning and implementation. The festival, in its second year, attracted more than 1,000 visitors. Skies over our city were filled with colorful and creative kites, flown by people of all ages. Debe Shafer and Gerry Logan established the program two years ago.

Dr. Heo and his RPTS 321 event management students were back in action in April. They hosted the second annual Department of Recreation, Park and Tourism Sciences Pickleball tournament. Pickleball is a fun new sport that appeals to people of all ages and athletic abilities. It mixes rules, skills and techniques of tennis, table tennis, and badminton, all into a memorable and health-enhancing experience. The tournament attracted 100 participants from cities throughout our region of Texas and Louisiana. Participants ranged in age from that of the typical Aggie student to the age of former students old enough to remember the first session of the first class taught in the department that was to become RPTS. That class was convened in February of 1966.

If the spring semester had a thrilling moment akin to Splash Mountain’s “five story drop,” it was our 50th Anniversary Celebration on April 21st and 22nd. Our Celebration began with a memorable pre-Muster reception in the AGLS building on April 21st. Breakfast the next morning featured a signing ceremony for a new partnership with the National Park Service. Through that partnership, RPTS students admitted to the “ProRanger Program” may earn special access to National Park Service positions and careers. Following breakfast, guests toured the A&M campus, with stops at all sites that have housed the department offices over the 50 year period. Dr. Crompton staged his famous “ad hoc” experiences for select guests during a stop at Francis Hall. The afternoon featured a tour of Kyle field, hosted by some of the Southeastern Conference’s finest athletes (all RPTS students) and a trivia game in Jeopardy format. The banquet on Friday evening featured scholarships and awards. Visionary leaders of the Department, including Dr. Leslie M. Reid, Dr. Carson Watt, Dr. Lou Hodges, and Dr. Carlton Van Doren (via video with Dr. Brett Wright) welcomed students and former students to the event. Mrs. Debe Shafer led the event planning team, assisted by Melyssa-Anne Stricklin, Debbie Barnes and Dr. Lou Hodges. Students in Mrs. Shafer’s event planning class staged the event in such a creative and professional manner that Imagineers of the Disney Corporation would be very impressed. Our students were superb event planners. Current and past members of our faculty and staff are very proud of them!

All rides must come to an end. For me, the end of the exit queue is more than the end of another exciting semester and the profound honor of congratulating the RPTS graduating class of 2016. I am transitioning from my role as Department Head. Administrative appointments at Texas A&M are for four year terms, renewable for four years. June 1, 2016 will be the first day of my ninth year. I look forward to welcoming our new department head and doing all I can to help her or him sustain the energy, commitment, talent, and vision that has made RPTS the world’s leader in education, research, and outreach in the experience industries. For me, the opportunity to serve as Department Head for the past eight years has been an honor that vastly exceeds any for which I could have hoped. It has truly been an extraordinary ride!

- Gary
As previously stated by our Department Head, the Recreation, Park and Tourism Sciences Department hosted a once in a lifetime event the weekend of April 21-23 to celebrate the 50th Anniversary of the Department!

This celebratory weekend consisted of a pre-Muster ceremony on Thursday evening, April 21 and continued on into the weekend. On Friday, April 22, the day began with breakfast in the Agri-Life building, a walk down memory lane through previous RPTS homes, an elaborate tour of Kyle Field, an interactive quiz bowl tournament, and finally ended with an exquisite banquet.

For more information on the celebration, please visit our website to view the 50th Anniversary Newsletter: [http://rpts.tamu.edu/spring-2016-and-50th-anniversary-newsletters/](http://rpts.tamu.edu/spring-2016-and-50th-anniversary-newsletters/)
A big congratulations to **Dr. Scott Shafer**, for being elected a Fellow of the Academy of Leisure Sciences!

Congratulations to **Mr. Jim Mičulká** and **Ms. Susan Scott** for their partnership with the National Park Service, Amtrak - RPTS “Trails & Rails” program, which won two awards in the National Park Service virtual Rose Bowl parade. The awards were for “Best Entry Portraying a Program” and “Best Entry Portraying Volunteers.”

Congratulations to **Dr. David Matarrita-Cascante**, for being selected to receive a 2016-2017 Fulbright US Scholar Grant!

Congratulations to **Dr. Crompton** for being selected to receive one of Texas A&M University’s top honors, A Distinguished Achievement Award for Graduate Mentoring!

Congratulations to RPTS major **Courtney Siska** and her cookie business “Cailey Anne Cookies” for winning the award for the Best Chocolate Chip cookie in Texas!

Congratulations to **Dr. Angela Durko**, **Dr. Linda Enoh**, **Dr. Tazim Jamal**, and **Mr. Rick Harwell** for being accepted into the 2016 College of Agriculture and Life Sciences Critical Thinking Academy!
A big congratulations to **Dr. Corliss Outley** for securing funding for a $500,000 project, funded by the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services!

Congratulations to **Dr. Mike Schuett** and **Dr. Gerard Kyle** for receiving confirmation of funding of the Texas Parks and Wildlife licensed angler survey! Coupled with fisheries ecology data, the study’s findings are critical for guiding TPWD policy and fisheries management.

Congratulations to **Dr. Harold Manzano** and **Ms. Melyssa-Anne Stricklin** for mastering the requirements for the Academy for Future Faculty Certificate Program!

Congratulations **Ms. Clara Aguilar** on completion of requirements for her Employee and Organizational Development Certificate!

Congratulations to RPTS doctoral candidate **Amit Ghoshal**, for earning recognition as a Center for the Integration of Research, Teaching and Learning (CIRTL) Scholar!

Congratulations to former PhD student, **Dr. Justin Harmon** for being appointed Assistant Professor (tenure-track) in the Recreation and Parks Management program at the University of North Carolina, Greensboro.
2nd Annual Kite Festival

Led by Dr. Jinmoo Heo, the RPTS 321 Event Management class held the 2nd Annual Kite Festival in Wolf Pen Creek Park. Students who helped plan the event were expected to gain the logistics of planning, organizing, and implementing management skills in real life settings. The event included a kite competition, music, crafts and a photo booth!

RPTS 320 Movie Night

The RPTS 320 students hosted a movie in the AGLS 4th floor lobby on March 3rd. The movie Unbranded tells the story of four Aggies who travel from Mexico to Canada with 16 rescued mustangs. The free event also included free popcorn, candy and drinks!
It is difficult to point to one particular memory of Gary Ellis. He has been an exceptional departmental manager and colleague during his tenure as our head. My memories of Gary conjure the following descriptors: thoughtful, innovative, thorough, humorous, open, supportive, tenacious, decisive, analytical and communicative. While not a complete list that’s a solid start on his qualities. Oh yes, he’s also self-deprecating and a good sport. It is truly hard to imagine anyone who would have done a better job leading RPTS over the past eight years than Gary Ellis.

- Dr. Scott Shafer

Dr. Ellis, thank you for being there for our students, your participation in workshops and field trips, supporting research and learning has enriched research and practice, RPTS and our TAMU land grant mission.

- Dr. Tazim Jamal

My favorite memory of Gary Ellis occurred a few summers ago when I was among those invited to accompany him, his partner Patty, and his daughter Liz, on a sailing in the British Virgin Islands. It was marvelous to watch Gary relax and play “skipper” to his crew. Gary was in his element and I cannot thank him enough for sharing his sailing expertise and providing us a truly memorable and enjoyable experience.

- Dr. David Scott

Thank you for all you've done for the RPTS student body, the organizations within our department, and the people that work here! Your positive impact on the people here has made the RPTS experience an absolutely incredible one. Thank you for believing in the students here and supporting them in their endeavors. It’s been an honor and a pleasure to work with you!

- Amy Wagner

Dr. Ellis has provided outstanding leadership to sustain and position the department for future success. He has been an avid supporter of Texas A&M AgriLife Extension programs in the department and has supported many opportunities for all staff professional growth and enrichment. Through service in leadership, Dr. Ellis continues to inspire and be an exemplary role model to us all.

- Mr. Stephen Brueggerhoff

Gary, I cannot thank you enough for all you’ve done for our department. You have consistently and empathetically led us without bias. You’ve had great vision for how we should progress and have diligently worked to complete the tasks necessary to have your vision realized. Beyond your leadership to our department, you’ve been important to my personal development as a faculty member and my daughters have thoroughly enjoyed your seemingly never ending cabinet of surprises. Best wishes for the next phase in your career.

- Dr. Jim Petrick
I remember that in my first term when Dr. Ellis and I were staying at the Omni Hotel, Corpus Christi, for a conference. After the long drive and searching for roadside parking, I was overwhelmed with my bags when I met Dr. and Mrs. Ellis at the front desk. As a true gentleman, he offered to help me with my bag which I politely declined. He insisted and assisted me. I don't know of another Department Head who would have done that to a new student, whom he barely knew. Dr. Ellis is always approachable and willing to help everyone. May the wind and the waves always be on your side Dr. Gary Ellis!

- Amit Ghoshal

When Dr. Ellis spoke with my class about customer service it was a delight to watch him tell a story about his young daughter receiving some Disney magic, and then watch the students beam his enthusiasm back at him. He skillfully connects concepts from academic literature to personal experience, and then helps students understand how to apply the ideas in their careers. I’ve also benefited from watching him talk through challenging problems, thoughtfully applying relevant principles and values. Dr. Ellis has become an important role model in my life, and I’m very thankful for his patience and care.

- Ms. Susan Scott

Congratulations on reaching this milestone, Dr. Ellis. A huge thanks from all of us for all of your efforts. We will miss you as chair of our department, but we will always remember your generous attitude and infectious laugh. One more thing! Please continue to be one of my committee members.

- Sukjoon “SJ” Yoon

When I think about Dr. Ellis three words come to my mind: commitment, welcoming, and appreciation. Dr. Ellis is dedicated to activities that enhance the quality and performance of our department. For instance, his leadership and motivation helped undergraduates to participate in the NRPA Congress. His office is open to students; he has helped us to have a better experience in this department. Lastly, Dr. Ellis expresses his gladness at the success of any member of this department, big and small accomplishments. Committed, welcoming, and appreciation are values that I will bring with into the next stage of my career in the field of Recreation and Youth Development. Thank you, Dr. Ellis, for all your lessons as a professor and department head.

- Dr. Harold Manzano

Thanks for taking care of all of your staff! It has been great having a boss that supports professional development for our staff like Dr. Ellis has. A couple of favorite memories I have of Dr. Ellis is the time he dressed up like Donald Trump and a pirate on two different occasions!

- Taylor Leach
Thank You, Dr. Ellis

No words can express how deep my appreciation is for Dr. Ellis’ support of the work of the National Park Service, for making NPS staff feel part of the RPTS family, and for allowing us opportunities to contribute to the education, research, and outreach mission of this wonderful department. The substantial support of Dr. Ellis to the Gulf Coast Cooperative Ecosystems Studies Unit (GC CESU) has made possible for national parks and NPS programs across the nation to implement hundreds of projects expanding many disciplines and generating research, technical assistance, and education opportunities for parks and the GC CESU academic partners. At a personal level, Dr. Ellis’s extraordinary leadership skills, creative mind, and commitment to service inspire me every day. We have all been so lucky to work under his leadership!

- Ms. Ana Giselle More-Bourgeois

Dr. Ellis has been a true leader of the RPTS department in both the professional and personal settings. As a transfer student from Wildlife and Fisheries, I felt out of place and unsure of myself. However, once I settled into the department, I realized I not only had a new, exciting research program but also became a part of an academic family. Thank you for all you've done to help connect disconnected and new graduate students, Dr. Ellis. Cheers!

- Liz Marchio

Thank you to Dr. Ellis on for his ability to keep research methods entertaining with his use of unexpected and comical photos used in his class presentation slides. A special thank you for your support through my PhD program and continued support as I began my academic career as part of your RPTS faculty - Fair Winds and Following Seas!

- Dr. Angela Durko

I first met Dr. Ellis at the Utah social during the 2004 NRPA in Reno. I was a graduate student at the time, and have had a long lasting impression of Dr. Ellis ever since. There were several other occasions afterwards where our paths crossed before I joined the RPTS, but I didn’t have the chance to talk to him. Although Dr. Ellis did not remember that we met J, I was truly blessed to work with him during the last several years.

- Dr. Jinmoo Heo

I had the privilege of having Dr. Ellis as my committee chair and my boss. He makes coming to work fun. One of my favorite memories would be when we were working on creating my thesis storyboards. It was exciting bouncing ideas off someone who has similar interests and creativity. No idea was considered a bad one. Thank you for creating an entertaining and fun academic partnership!

- Mrs. Melyssa-Anne Stricklin

Dr. Ellis (and Patty), thank you for “dumpster diving” with me after the Spring Banquet in the park when I lost my keys. I will never forget your selfless attitude and willingness to help!

- Ms. Irina Shatruk
I have Gary (and Patty) to thank for many things – sailing in the BVI, St. Marten and Lake Conroe, paddling trips around Texas and Louisiana, a place to live when I moved here last fall, convincing me to semi-retire and move to Texas A&M; but above all, I thank Gary and Patty for thirty-one years of true friendship and many great times together. Now that he will be stepping down, I hope we will have even more time to paddle, sail and enjoy the great outdoors!

- Mr. Rick Harwell

Never will I forget my time traveling with Dr. Ellis and my stellar quiz bowl team to Las Vegas to compete in the NRPA conference. It was such an honor to be selected as a team member and having Dr. Ellis officiate the game made it that much more special. I’ll never forget the look on the opponents faces when we smoked the warm-up questions because Dr. Ellis had Amy write them. Although we lost (totally bogus btw) Dr. Ellis was still our biggest fan! Love that man!

- Dara Thomas

After I joined the RPTS department in 2011 fall, the Head of the Department, Dr. Gary Ellis’ pleasant personality and welcoming attitude motivated me to visit him quite often. Except a few times when he had other appointments, his door was always open for students, too along with the staff and faculty. His amicable personality, highly cooperative attitude, inspiring and open-mentoring style fascinated me the most. Students could meet him beyond designated office hours in the evening, which was another factor to facilitate easy access to him. To me, Dr. Ellis is one of a few most accessible, highly cooperative, inspiring, and motivating leaders I have ever met in my professional and academic career. I will cherish this fond-memory forever.

- Tek Dangi

My favorite memory of Dr. Ellis’s time as department head is a personal one. One Saturday afternoon a few years ago, I was showing my wife, daughter, son-in-law, and our two-year old grandson around the RPTS floor of AGLS. Dr. Ellis was working in his office that Saturday, so I introduced the family to him, although I was worried we were interrupting important work. But Gary didn’t mind. In fact, he had a box of toys in his office which included a little car which he gave to my grandson, who loves cars! Then Dr. Ellis took a photo of all of us together. Because our family always takes photos of each other, leaving one person out of the picture, to this day it is the only photograph we have of all of us together.

- Dr. Jim Gramann

My special memory of Dr. Ellis is one in which my son came to visit. He was very nice and friendly to him and to my surprise, he had a box full of toys in his office. When me and my son came to see him, he pulled out the box of toys and offered one to my son. He also constantly reminded me of the importance of balancing life and work and not letting work affect my relationship with my family. I have followed his advice since.

- Dr. David Matarrita-Cascante

One of my favorite moments with Dr. Ellis was when he got everyone laughing during the 2014 meeting of the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences Development Council (COADC). Dr. Ellis emceed the game, and like the real Jeopardy host Alex Trebek, requested that we select our categories just like contestants do on television; “I’ll take Texas Tourism for 200, Gary.” The game progressed for a few minutes until quiz bowl captain Marcie Murfield (’14) was able to select a category. She said “I’ll take Youth Development for 100...”, and then stopped mid-sentence while Dr. Ellis looked at her encouragingly, waiting for her to say “Gary”. Instead, Marcie stammered, smiled nervously, turned bright red and slowly said “...Dr. Ellis?” Her reluctance to refer to our beloved Department Head informally was so endearing to everyone present that the room broke out in laughter and applause. It made me personally very happy that this very important group of University donors could see how much Dr. Ellis’s students admire and respect him.

- Anna Mausolf
Dr. Ellis has taken our department to new levels in national recognition and professionalism. I have learned a great deal from him, and it has been a privilege to be his colleague. Thank you for your leadership!  

- Dr. Mike Schuett

I want to thank Dr. Ellis for being a leader who does not back down from difficult situations and leads quite often by example. Dept. Head is a thankless position as many claim and to that end, Dr. Ellis requires little to no recognition for leading a group of faculty that have many desires and needs. I will always recount how blessed I felt to have Gary listen to me when I would 'pop by' his office. He has the ability to stop everything he is doing and focus solely on you; that you are the only thing that matters at that point in time. Surveying the department heads throughout our field, I would say no one else would come close to the leadership and expertise possessed by Dr. Ellis. We have all been blessed to have him serve our great department!  

- Dr. Kyle Woosnam

Dr. Ellis has been extremely supportive of the partnership between the National Park Service, Amtrak and RPTS. It was a great feeling when he signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the NPS allowing my program to be housed with RPTS. His involvement at our national meeting in Chicago was outstanding and a privilege to introduce him to the national program. His support of allowing faculty, especially Susan Scott, to assist with the development of Trails & Rails brought our program to the national spotlight. It was a culinary coup to introduce him and his wife Patty, to the Scottish Burns night dinner tradition of Haggis, Tatties and Neeps.  

- Mr. Jim Miculka

Thank You from the RPTS Family!
We invite you to learn more about giving to the Department of Recreation, Park and Tourism Sciences. This webpage can link you to specific student enrichment projects that need your support. Wherever you chose to direct your gift, it will have a lasting impact on our students’ lives. Through your gifts, you can be a fellow “educator,” helping us to maintain and enhance the outstanding quality of the RPTS Department’s faculty, students and programs.

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Please contact Gary Ellis, Department Head, Recreation, Park and Tourism Sciences, at gellis1@tamu.edu or 979.845.7324 if you would like more information on a particular program. Gary will be happy to speak with you about gifts or any other matter that is of interest to you.

Dr. Gary Ellis, Department Head
Department of Recreation, Park and Tourism Sciences
2261 TAMU
College Station, TX 77843-2261

The Texas A&M Foundation
401 George Bush Drive
College Station, TX 77840
Sponsor a “Legend!”

Legends in the Texas Travel Industry Speaker Series
..........$1,000 per “Legend”

The “Legends in the Texas Travel Industry Speaker Series” brings travel industry leaders to the Texas A&M campus. Over a two day period, the speaker makes presentations to classes and interacts with students through meals, receptions, and other events. Students gain unique insight into the joys and challenges of managing major travel and experience industry attractions.

Mr. Paul Serff, President-Emeritus of the Texas Travel Industry Association, RPTS Tourism Management Advisory Committee member, and part-time Lecturer created this exciting program for us. Your gift of $1,000 will establish you as a sponsor of a visit by a “Legend!”

Support a Student’s Success!

Generous donors have endowed the following scholarships, and we always welcome additional contributions to those in any amount!

Contributions to endowments, of course, grow the principal and result in increased awards to students. If you are interested in establishing an endowed scholarship a minimum donation of $25,000 is required.

- COADC Jana Wisenbaker Scholarship in Recreation, Park and Tourism Sciences
- Leslie M. Reid Endowed Scholarship
- Lon and Inger Garrison Endowed Scholarship
- COADC Joyce Nies and Peter Witt Endowed Scholarship
- John L. Crompton Scholarship
- Elizabeth B. Crompton Scholarship
- COADC Heidemann Wuest Foundation Endowed Scholarship
- Sue Wittens ’72 Memorial Scholarship
- Elizabeth Lee Moore ’00 Endowed Scholarship
- Louis Hodges Scholarship in Recreation, Park and Tourism Sciences
- Marguerite Van Dyke Graduate Scholarship
- Korean RPTS Alumni and Marguerite Van Dyke Endowed Scholarship
- Thomas G. Viilo Endowed Memorial Scholarship
- TAES Jake Hershey Fellowship in Natural Resources Conservation
- Bradberry Chair for Youth Development
- Robert B. Ditton Endowed Scholarship
- Peter Witt and Joyce Nies Youth Development Excellence Endowment
Help RPTS Sustain and Grow Excellence!

RPTS Endowed Fund for Excellence

Gifts in any amount welcome

The RPTS Excellence fund provides support for special unanticipated opportunities for our students that arise during the course of many academic years.

Your gift to our excellence fund will grow the endowment and provide us even better opportunity to pursue opportunities and continue to grow quality experiences for our students.

Mr. Royce Wisenbaker and his wife Jana Wisenbaker endowed this excellence fund for RPTS, and your contribution can help us continue to grow that endowment.

Sponsor an RPTS Quiz Bowl Student!

RPTS Quiz Bowl

$1,000 for sponsorship of a team member or a coach

RPTS students compete with top students from other universities in a national Quiz Bowl competition each year at the NRPA Conference.

Teams are comprised of four students and a coach.

Students are quizzed on park, recreation and tourism management, marketing, foundational knowledge, and the planning and staging of experiences.

You have the opportunity to sponsor one or more members of our team or even our coach (your choice).

Our team this year placed 2nd overall!
Become a Partner in Advancing Our High Impact Learning Programs!

High-Impact Learning Courses

Monetary gifts in any amount are welcomed

The Department offers a variety of “high impact learning” classes.

These classes engage students in direct experiences with managers and marketing professionals.

Students study in major attractions, state and national parks and forests, in cities and towns, and even aboard cruise ships!

Students must bear the cost of special fees for such courses, to cover transportation, lodging, and related expenses. Your support will provide access to students unable to pay those fees.

Connect RPTS Students with Industry Through Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service!

Connected Learning for Industry Professionals and Students (E!CLIPS)

5,000 to sponsor an RPTS student intern for a semester

E!CLIPS is a Texas A&M/RPTS AgriLife Extension Program that supports real-world training and action research by connecting professionals in recreation, park and tourism businesses and agencies around the world with students and professional learning programs from RPTS Extension.

Opportunities are available in nature tourism, youth development, customer service, event planning, park and trail planning, and public input programs.
Mission

We enhance individual and social well-being and environmental and economic sustainability by generating and disseminating knowledge about the management and development of recreation, park, community, and tourism resources.

Vision

Our mission is achieved through undergraduate and graduate education, outreach, and research that integrate social science and natural resource management disciplines. We strive to understand and respond to the global and local implications of recreation, parks, tourism, and natural resource dimensions of diverse and changing societies. We endeavor to conduct an effective mix of theoretical and applied research, and liberal and professional education that prepares society-ready graduates and provides responsive service and outreach that meets the needs of our constituents.

Core Values

We believe that our education, scientific research, and outreach programs contribute to the expansion of knowledge and to the enhancement of the quality of life. We believe that our primary responsibility is to the people of Texas; we believe that our contributions to the State of Texas will be enhanced by scholarly activities at the national and international levels. We value the contributions that parks, recreation, community development, and tourism can make to the health of communities. We believe in preparing society-ready graduates, with a solid educational foundation that includes experiential and liberal education, and development of skills for career employment and lifelong learning. We believe that the process of education is a collaborative learning experience, and students, faculty, practitioners, and professionals from other fields are participants in this process. We recognize the growing demographic and geographic diversity of Texas and the United States; the value of diversity in thoughts and ideas among the faculty, staff, and students; and the opportunities presented by an international border. We recognize the value of human diversity and interdisciplinary collaboration in teaching, research, and extension, and affirm the individual strengths that people bring to the Department. We are committed to the contributions of recreation, parks, community development and tourism make to the sustainability and stewardship of cultural, historical, and natural resources. We are committed to the concepts of social and environmental justice. We value scholarship that is validated by peers and external audiences; and we believe that scholarship can be expressed through teaching, research, and extension.