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.
Please consider this invitation to join us to celebrate the Department of Recreation, Park and Tourism Sciences’ 50 years of success! On April 21st we will kick-off a memorable and historic celebration. The theme of our two-day festival was crafted by our students and is heartily endorsed by our faculty and staff: “Keeping the Spirit, Advancing the Vision, and Living the Adventure!”

Your two-day experience will include Muster on the evening of the 21st, a variety of social events, campus tours, and recreation opportunities. The celebration will culminate with our scholarship banquet at the beautiful new Thomas G. Hildebrand, DVM ’56 Equine Complex at Texas A&M University. Founding Department Head Leslie M. Reid and Dr. Lou Hodges will provide introductory remarks and our Distinguished professor, Dr. John Crompton, will share his thoughts on our Department’s past, present, and future.

In February of 1966, Professor Reid entered a classroom in the “Horse Barn” (across from The Commons and near the Teague Building) on the Texas A&M campus. He convened the first meeting of the first class in the department that would become Recreation, Park and Tourism Sciences. Students in that class became world-class citizens, inspirational family members and parents, and influential leaders in their professions.
Among the disciplines represented are geography, sociology, natural resource law, engineering, marketing, forestry, wildlife and fisheries management, tourism, landscape architecture, parks and recreation and, more recently, youth development. Dr. Reid recruited students who had deep, unwavering passion for learning, a commitment to Aggie values, and ambition for advancing quality of life through selfless service. He set the bar for excellence at its highest level and never compromised. Most significantly, as witnessed by countless testimonies from former students, Dr. Reid took keen interest in the unique needs, challenges, and opportunities of each individual student. He committed fully to helping students succeed academically, professionally, and personally.

These principles are the foundation for the world-leading program in parks, recreation, and tourism at Texas A&M University. They are indeed the spirit of our past, the heart of current initiatives toward advancing our mission, and the key to our future as we enter a second 50 years of helping students succeed and crafting quality experiences, lives, and communities. We look forward to our celebration and to welcoming you back to the Texas A&M campus!

-Gary

Over three thousand park, recreation, tourism and community development majors have followed in the footsteps of these pioneers. They have led, and are leading lives worth living. Their contributions have elevated and enriched the lives of countless others worldwide.

The welcome by Dr. Reid is particularly significant. His original vision for the Department embraces all three elements of our theme. The principles he followed in founding the Department are the heart of the “spirit” on which the Department is founded and are also integral to “advancing the vision” and “living the adventure.” Dr. Reid assembled a world-class faculty and staff. Faculty represented the very best of related academic disciplines. That practice continues to this day.

Dr. Leslie Reid (2nd from the left) pictured with staff members in 1966.

- Gary
As previously stated by our Department Head, please make plans to join us this spring to celebrate our Department’s 50th Anniversary. This memorable and historic weekend will take place April 21 – 23, 2016. We will be Keeping the Spirit, Advancing the Vision, and Living the Adventure.

This celebration is headed by RPTS faculty and staff. The committee consists of Dr. Lou Hodges (Chair), Dr. Gary Ellis, Dr. Scott Shafer, Dr. Jinmoo Heo, Mrs. Debe Shafer, Mr. Stephen Brueggerhoff, Mr. Jim Miculka, Mrs. Debbie Barnes, Mrs. Melyssa-Anne Stricklin and Ms. Jennifer Burnett. Along with the committee, the RPTS 320 class - Event Management and Operations— is helping to plan this magical event. The class had an initial meeting with the "client" (the departmental committee) to gain information needed to start the planning phase. After thorough research, the student groups each created an event proposal. Each group then gave a professional presentation to the client to pitch their ideas for the 50th Anniversary event. Pictured below is the event logo, venue site visits, and the event proposals.

For more sponsorship information, please visit our website: http://rpts.tamu.edu/50thsponsorship/

The festivities are underway! We hope you attend our event this spring to experience the creativity of our students, faculty and staff in RPTS!
Congratulations to Mr. Rick Harwell, who accepted our Assistant Professor of the Practice position. Rick has extensive experience in parks and recreation, agency leadership, and in private industry.

Congratulations to Liz Marchio, who was awarded the $4000 Marine Aquarium Society of North America's (MASNA) graduate student scholarship!! These funds will support Liz’s research on the social world of aquarium keepers.

Congratulations to Dr. Jim Petrick, who accepted an invitation to serve as one of four members on the policy board for the *Journal of Travel Research*.

Congratulations to Walt Dabney on being selected as recipient of the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences Outstanding Alumni Award for 2015! Mr. Dabney graduated from our department in 1969 and spent 30 years with the National Park Service.

Congratulations to RPTS student Stephanie Aiple on being selected to represent our Texas A&M Volleyball Team on the AVCA All–South Region Team in a second consecutive appearance.

Congratulations to Jamie Hackett for being selected to receive the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences Outstanding Early Career Alumni Award for 2015! Ms. Hackett currently serves on our Parks and Conservation Specialization Advisory Board.
Congratulations to RPTS students Kylee Hargrove, Dara Thomas, Amy Wagner, Kayley Westbrooker and Ms. Kelly Kyle, our 2015 RPTS Quiz Bowl Team, on a 2nd place victory at the NRPA Annual Conference!

Congratulations to Dr. Amanda Stronza and her Ecoexist team (including RPTS graduate students Lauren Redmore and Patricia Mokotedi) on their completed documentary film, *Pathways to Coexistence*.

Congratulations to RPTS Advisory Board Member, Dr. Chris Nunes, on being elected President of the American Academy for Park and Recreation Administration.

Congratulations to RPTS graduate student Gerry Logan on receiving the highest level of certification through NRPA, Park and Recreation Executive. Gerry was also awarded a Young Professional Fellowship at this year's conference.

The Youth Development Initiative began six years ago with the leadership of Dr. Peter Witt. Congratulations to Dr. Chris Harrist whose report to the Sequor Foundation was the basis for the decision to continue funding this Initiative.

Congratulations to RPTS student Tra Carson for leading the Texas A&M Football team in rushing yards this season for a total of 1059 yards in the regular season!
The RPTS 321 class hosted the first annual Pickleball event on November 15th, 2015. The event was created to attract hundreds of families and sports enthusiasts from local and surrounding areas. The Invitational included a Sunday full of tournament play, interactive activities and pure fun! Bracketed competitions were broken down by age and skill level and all official USAPA rules applied.

RPTS 311 Programming

The RPTS 311 (Planning and Implementation of Events and Programs) class teaches students about program planning, operations, administration and evaluation. The course also outlines the development of special events including service quality, hospitality training and participant satisfaction. Students are provided the opportunity to volunteer, complete a group project and develop their own program plans!
Why did you choose RPTS as your major?

I’ve always had a passion for travel, which is why I chose the Tourism Management emphasis areas within RPTS. I knew I wanted to do something that would have a positive impact on people. RPTS is the absolute best way to combine my passion for travel and my desire to create positive experiences for people!

What do you want to do with your degree?

After graduation, I’m interested in pursuing a career within parks and recreation programming but I would really like to go back to school at some point and obtain a Master’s degree, examining tourism, recreation, and leisure from a more theoretical perspective. I’m really interested in examining how programs and events bring in tourists and the impacts those events have on residents and the host city.

What is your favorite Aggie tradition?

My favorite Aggie tradition has to be the Aggie Ring. The Aggie Ring is a symbol of hard work, dedication, and, of course, exemplification of the Aggie Spirit and Core Values.
What’s your favorite class in RPTS?

My favorite class is actually a two-way tie between Dr. Scott’s RPTS 340: Recreation, Park and Diverse Populations class and Dr. Woosnam’s RPTS 426: Tourism Impacts class. They’re both incredible professors and the classes cover concepts applicable to all aspects to the RPTS field!

What is the best advice someone has ever given you about college life?

Never give up on your dreams! Even if things don’t fall into place the first time, never, ever, ever give up!

What has been your most treasured vacation?

Well, it’s not so much a “vacation” because I worked while I was there but this past spring semester I worked for Walt Disney World as a front desk cast member at Disney’s All-Star Resort! It was the most incredible experience. Nothing beats getting to go to the Magic Kingdom on your days off. Those five months will always have a special place in my heart because, not only did I get to have a lot of fun, I got to learn a lot about the tourism industry by working at the fifth-largest resort in the country! Work was never boring, that’s for sure!

What piece of advice you would give to future RPTS students?

A piece of advice I would give would be to get involved in the major-specific organizations the RPTS department offers! With RPTS Aggie REPS, RPTS Club, SEPA, and HFTP, there truly is something for everyone. Every organization offers opportunities to network and expand your skillset.
**Why did you choose the RPTS Department at TAMU?**

I learned that Texas A&M was a great research Institute after been introduced to it by my sponsors and a professor from my country who studied here at TAMU.

**With what projects are you currently involved?**

Coming from a country that wildlife and people are sharing the land space, Botswana, I have experienced conflicts between human and wildlife. This has led to my interest in working with the Ecoexist program which is working on human/elephant conflict employing research to explore tourism solutions that will ensure coexistence between the people and elephants. My role is to look at tourism options that will help the communities’ resilience and also inform policies geared towards coexistence.

**What is your favorite destination? Why?**

So far my favorite destination has been the Okavango Delta. It is tranquil. The Okavango is a place where you connect with nature, and you just wish time would stand still. Besides the meandering waterways, there is an abundance of wildlife, diverse landscapes, and the beautiful species of birds make the whole place colorful and worth visiting.
**Why did you choose the RPTS Department at TAMU?**

I came to the RPTS department specifically to become involved with the Ecoexist Project, and I’ve been very impressed with the diversity of research interests of the faculty here and the interdisciplinary focus across departments. I ultimately chose Texas A&M because of the great reputation that the school has internationally within the world of wildlife conservation, and also for the numerous opportunities for interdisciplinary collaboration throughout my degree program.

**With what projects are you currently involved?**

I am working with the Ecoexist project, which is a project focused on developing sustainable solutions for human-elephant conflict in Northern Botswana around the Okavango Delta. Across our project site, the elephant population is the same size as the human population and many of these subsistence farming communities are vulnerable to high levels of crop raiding by the elephants. I’m one of the social scientists on the team and I’m very much looking forward to getting out to the field to start to explore how communities in the area navigate the challenges of living in close proximity to such large, powerful, and charismatic animals.

**What is your favorite destination? Why?**

My favorite destination is the coast of Oregon. There are few places that offer such exceptional scenery - beautifully foggy days, shockingly cold water, vast stretches of undeveloped coast, a really great surf, plus nearby old growth forest - with the unique culture of the neighboring communities.
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 choose 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.

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.

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!”**

*Legoens 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 2\textsuperscript{nd} 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.
“Dr. Clare Gunn was arguably the “founding father” of scholarly tourism studies in the academy. His principles of planning and design were so innovative and they violated the popular notions of what tourism is all about. His extraordinary pioneering career opened multiple doors for those of us who came after.” – John L. Crompton, 2014

Dr. Gunn passed away at the age of 99 on Thursday, November 19th, 2015, leaving behind a long-lasting legacy and heavy influence on our field. He began his career at Michigan State in 1940 and retired as Emeritus Professor from Texas A&M University in 1984.

Dr. Gunn was also the first individual to receive a Ph.D. in Landscape Architecture in the United States. The world changed profoundly during Clare Gunn’s remarkable 60-year career. Those changes resulted in the extraordinarily rapid evolution of tourism. Dr. Gunn anticipated exponential growth of tourism in the latter half of the 20th century, which prepared the field by providing concepts and tools to accommodate this growth. He summarized his life’s work in these words:

“During the early years of my career I was plagued with frustration and even disappointment. It seemed that the challenges that were stimulating me to study and search for new concepts were not shared by others in tourism and landscape architecture., my professional foundations. I even wondered if I should change the direction of my career. However, it turned out to be tremendously fulfilling. My life has been a long, wonderful and fascinating journey.”

Thank you Dr. Gunn for your many contributions to our field. You will be missed.
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.