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From the Department Head

Hard to believe that it is summer 2018 and another academic year is almost complete. Spring 2018 flew by, punctuated on Friday May 11th with the graduation of 82 undergraduate and three graduate students. It was a pleasure to see their smiles and shake their hands as they walked the stage. Earlier in the spring term we were fortunate to hire two new faculty members and a new Information Technology Specialist. Our new faculty members are Dr. Jun Wang and Dr. Darlene Locke. Dr. Wang joins us from Tufts University where she is an Assistant Research Professor at the Institute for Applied Research in Youth Development and Dr. Locke joins us as a seasoned Extension Specialist with an impressive background in AgriLife 4-H Youth Development. Our new IT Specialist is Mr. Omar Valenzuela who joins us with an IT background that includes the College of Engineering, industry and military experience. It is a pleasure to have these new colleagues on board.

As we begin the summer there are study abroad courses being taught in Fiji and Australia and a youth development field course is being taught in central Texas. Many other courses are being offered this summer and RPTS students are engaged in internships all over the state and across the country.

In this newsletter you’ll read about a number of faculty and student accomplishments.

A former student spotlight has been added and we again include a closer look at a graduate and undergraduate student who are members of the on campus RPTS family. Speaking of accomplishments, in 2018 Dr. Lou Hodges is celebrating his 50th year with the department. Lou remains dedicated to educating and assisting students every day. It’s hard to imagine how many positive differences he has made in the lives of our students over the last half century.

We hope you enjoy catching up with us in the pages that follow. Please stay in touch and let us know about the great things you are doing for people and places around the world.
Departmental Accomplishments

Congratulations to Dr. Corliss Outley for her recent keynote presentation at the 2018 Conference on the Value of Play. She and her co-presenters Myron Floyd, Rasul Mowatt and Harrison Pinckney presented The Implications of Race on Play for Youth of Color.

Congratulations to Dr. Courtney Suess-Raeisinafchi, for receiving a Neuhaus-Shepardson Faculty Development Grant. Dr. Suess-Raeisinafchi plans to use her grant to attend the North American Higher Education International’s GLOMED conference, enhance her research and undertake an international classroom to classroom project.

Congratulations to Seniors Mary Austin Morgan, Dillon O’Brien and Emily Gunderson who were voted Senior Merit Award winners in College of Agriculture and Life Sciences. These three students have exhibited excellence in their academic and extracurricular work. They were formally recognized at a college banquet associated with Family Weekend.
Congratulations to **Dr. Gerard Kyle** who is on a team selected for funding through the T3 program. He teamed with **Rich Woodward** (Agriculture Economics) and **Ashley Ross-Wooten** (Marine Sciences TAMUG) on a project titled Community Resilience and Climate Instability.

Congratulations to **Mrs. Kelly Kyle** who recently received a $10,000 Innovative Pedagogy Grant through Instructional Technology Services. Mrs. Kyle will apply the grant to the development and implementation of teaching methods in on-line classrooms.

Congratulations to **Mr. Andrew Lacanienta** who has received a Texas A&M Association of Former Students Distinguished Graduate Student Award. These are very competitive awards with only a few given annually. The award recognizes Andrew’s success as a graduate student and his contributions to our department through teaching, research and service.

Congratulations to **Dr. Angela Durko** who recently received a Neuhaus-Shepardson teaching development grant award. Dr. Durko will use the award to travel to the KIMEP International Research Conference in Kazakhstan this spring where she will present on critical thinking.

Congratulations to **Mr. Rick Harwell** who was recently recognized as a Certified Interpretive Trainer by the National Association of Interpretation. Achieving this recognition requires a good deal of training and proving one’s mettle.
For the last 4 years students of Texas A&M’s RPTS 321 course, have planned, advertised, organized, and implemented an amazing event. **They are the hosts of KITE FEST. This year they hosted more than 2,000 happy guests!**

The students worked hard to find sponsors and vendors, and through these collaborations they provided an amazing chance for community members to enjoy kite flying and additional activities including: a petting zoo, face painting, frozen t-shirt contest, kite-making, prizes and much more!

*We would like to congratulate and thank them for all their hard work and the wonderful experiences they offer!!!
Can you tell us a little about yourself?

My name is Hunter Rush, born and raised in Beaumont, Texas. I moved to College Station in 2004 and graduated in 2008. My RPTS internship was with MHS Planning & Design in Tyler, Texas so I packed up my belongings and moved sight un-seen. After my internship, I was hired by the firm and became a partner in 2016. I have continued to remain active in TRAPS and NRPA. In my spare time, my girlfriend Elizabeth and I travel as often as we can and continually work and play in the outdoors. Oh, and I love Mexican food.

How did the RPTS degree help prepare you for your career?

Gosh, I don't have enough time to express how much it truly prepared me but I can start with two professors. Dr. Scott Shafer introduced me to site specific design. Many of us grow up experiencing public spaces but do not realize the time, effort and science that professionals put into creating those spaces. I have carried that into my everyday life as a park designer/planner. I must also mention that Dr. Crompton’s course introduced me to much of my everyday activities, although, I wasn't aware at the time. I work closely with local governments all over the state with Parks and Open Space Master Planning, Grant Writing and assisting in the acquisition of park land in order to design and build the best parks for each individual community. I actually keep a handful of Dr. Crompton’s books in my office for reference!

Was it always your dream to work in the RPTS field?

I’ve always been drawn to the outdoors and loved participating in both active and passive recreation but my initial path at A&M was Construction Science. My math professors (or maybe my math skills?) quickly guided me in a different direction. As soon as I set foot in Francis Hall (the OG of RPTS), met the professors and people, I knew it was my true calling.
What is the most rewarding part your job?

Taking a piece of undeveloped ground and spending months or even years to design and construct a park for local communities is incredibly rewarding. Although, the most rewarding part of my job is visiting parks across the state that our firm has designed and witnessing children and adults of all ages playing and recreating in those same spaces that were previously just lines on paper.

Do you feel that your job is related/connected to your personality?

Completely. I love the outdoors. I’ve always loved being able to connect with nature and with others who share that same passion. I get to participate in programmed and non-programmed recreational activities all over the state – while working! In addition to that, I get to work closely with people and local officials to design and develop those unique spaces. My personality is one that loves the outdoors and I get to live and share that passion every day.

If hiring, what would you look for from new graduates from RPTS?

Passion and drive. In this field of work, you have to care about the service you provide. You can have a vast knowledge of how people recreate and why they recreate, but to truly understand different communities you must have enthusiasm about planning, creating and developing those spaces. We are always presenting to local communities, City Council’s, EDC Boards, etc. so I would also look for someone with charisma and public speaking skills. Most people do not like public speaking, but it gets easier over time!

What advice would you give to current RPTS students?

Get involved! I have found that getting involved with groups you enjoy, whether it be a national group or a small local group, pays off greatly! Most importantly, it allows you the opportunity to participate in what you love and with others who share that same passion. Secondly, the more you are involved in your field and your community, the more you can learn and help others throughout your remaining years at A&M and throughout your future. Get outdoors, do what you love and have fun!
Could you give us some information about you and your dreams?

I am a 2\textsuperscript{nd} year Ph.D. student in the RPTS Department while working as a Research Assistant for Dr. Gerard Kyle in the Human Dimensions of Natural Resources Lab. In Vietnam, my home country, I worked as a Lecturer in architecture, urban design and urban planning. Discovering America’s national parks with my beloved son and husband is a dream that I will start to make a reality this summer.

Do you find any common elements between Urban Design and RPTS?

I think both contribute to improve individual and social well-being as well as enhance environmental and economic sustainability. However, urban design deals with smaller scales with defined spaces while RPTS seems to impact human life through a larger scale with blurred boundaries.

What led you to choose to continue your studies in general and in RPTS specifically?

As a lecturer and a researcher, I soon felt the need of pursuing higher education in order to learn more and create more knowledge which can contribute to society. A meeting with Dr. Gerald Kyle has confirmed my choice to pursue a doctoral program with the focus on the human dimensions of natural resources in the RPTS Department.

What are some challenges that you face daily related to your multiple roles?

Being an international student, a mom of a 22-month old son, and starting my Ph.D. in a new field, has put a lot of pressure and stress on me regardless of my preparation. Without love and support from my husband, my family in Vietnam as well as my supervisor and friends in RPTS, I don’t know how I could overcome all of these challenges.
Where do you see yourself in your future career? How would you connect it with your current studies?

After graduation, along with teaching, I am hoping to become a productive international researcher who will focus on the environmental and social issue in the U.S., Vietnam, among other areas. With the academic knowledge, professional experiences, and technical skills that I receive in the RPTS program I believe I am on the right track to pursue my career goal.

My life at RPTS is full of nonexchangeable and amazing experiences. Thank you so much for giving me a chance to be part of our family!

Do you have any advice for future students?

“Please never give up”, that’s what Ms. Irina, a super sweet staff member at RPTS told me at the beginning of my first semester and that’s also what I want to give you as advice. There are moments you struggle with your studying, your research, and your life. But there is always support from RPTS to help you find your enthusiasm again.

What was the lesson learned by your experience as a Lecturer and how do you connect it with the fact that once again you are a student?

I have learned a lot from the RPTS professors, especially their enthusiasm in teaching, inspiring students, encouraging students to express their opinions, and becoming their friend. That is the learning environment I want to provide my future students.
UNDERGRADUATE STUDENT SPOTLIGHT

Alexandra Skrocki

Could you give us some information about you and your dreams?

I want to be happy. I know that happiness seems like a simple emotion to achieve, but I think that we often lose sight of the things that truly make us happy and we focus more on what has the most financial gain or ulterior motives.

Why did you choose RPTS as your major?

When applying to TAMU, I was scrolling through the list of majors and happened to stumble upon RPTS. Three years later and I absolutely love this major. I could not imagine studying anything else.

What is your emphasis?

I am currently pursuing certificates in Community Rec. & Park Administration, Parks & Conservation, Tourism Management, and Professional Event Management.

What has been your favorite class at A&M and why?

RPTS 476, Leadership for Outdoor Recreation. This class was extremely hands on and included a lot of out of the classroom learning. All of the material was so engaging and allowed me to learn so much about the Outdoor Recreation Field.
What piece of advice would you give to future RPTS students?

Take the time to get to know your professors. These relationships will help you facilitate out of the classroom learning and provide you with more insight into future career goals and aspirations.

What were some of the valuable lessons you have learned or experiences you have gained through your classes?

All of the courses build off of each other, so take the time early on to really solidify your knowledge. It will make your educational knowledge that much stronger.

What is your career direction?

It honestly changes weekly, but as of right now I am currently interested in working either within the golf tournament industry or facilitating outdoor recreation programs for military youth.

What is the best advice you have received about college life?

Take time for you. College can be extremely stressful and demanding. Thus, it is important to take time out of your busy schedule to reflect on the experiences and relationships gained.

"It’s your journey, shine your light!"
Hey RPTSers!
Share with us your DREAMS before coming to RPTS and your GOALS now!

"- 3rd grade: Be a fashion designer, author and role model for young girls.
- 6th grade: Play professional softball and be a motivational speaker.
- High school: Marry a professional athlete.
- Now: Buy the summer camp I grew up on in Los Angeles and work with youth and families involved in the juvenile justice system and their communities to promote positive youth development in placement and healthy reintegration.
(And own a bakery!)

Maria Leon

"My dreams before RPTS were to connect kids to nature and now my goal is to one day run my own outdoor education program."

Hanna Davisson

"Prior to beginning my career in RPTS, I always wanted to play soccer professionally. Unfortunately, my body did not allow me to reach that goal. But luckily, RPTS has and will continue to give me the knowledge, skills, drive, and opportunity to create meaningful change in peoples lives... All while having fun."

Ariel Marlowe
Hey RPTSers!
Share with us your DREAMS before coming to RPTS and your GOALS now!

"I switched my major multiple times before I found RPTS. My goal was to find a major that was not just memorizing age old material. I wanted something dynamic and evolving. RPTS meets these criteria. After completing this program, I hope to work in an environment that mirrors the familial atmosphere I have become accustomed to. To take a second look at things and see just how we can make things better. Be able to apply the principles I have learned from RPTS and revolutionize the industry."

-Ethan Dujay

"I've always wanted to find a job that I'd enjoy, but I was never sure which route to take. Thanks to RPTS, my goal is to find the perfect career where I get the opportunity to impact lives on a daily basis."

-Jordan Woosley

"Before I knew about RPTS I had dreams of becoming successful but I wasn’t sure in what career I wanted to try to excel. When I began taking my RPTS classes that all changed. I began to realize the power of the work done in parks and recreation and felt like a part of the RPTS family. My goal is to help make the world a better place through parks and recreation while utilizing the invaluable tools that I have learned in my time at Texas A&M in the RPTS Department."

-Cory Dentler
Howdy

FORMER STUDENTS

Our department is committed to providing an excellent education. We hope that the educational experience you had in our program and at Texas A&M is proving to be a positive influence in your life. Collecting information from former students like you will help us communicate the RPTS profession and plan for the future. Please take a few minutes to complete this survey. Responses will not be identified with you. Results will be aggregated and used to advise prospective students, assist current students, and plan for positive changes to the program.

Please click the link below:

http://tamuag.az1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_2m03btr

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Support RPTS

We invite you to learn more about giving to the Department of Recreation, Park and Tourism Sciences. The webpage link below can link you to specific opportunities that need your support. Wherever you choose to direct your gift, it will have a lasting impact on our department. 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.

ACTIVATE the GIVE ONLINE button to make a donation. You may give to support students through an enrichment fund. You may also support faculty and staff enrichment. These enrichment funds support either students or faculty and staff with travel to conferences, small research grants, educational enhancement, or professional development of different types. You can see more detail on the following pages.

For more information about giving including details about contributing to specific scholarships, please contact Dr. Scott Shafer, Department Head, Recreation, Park and Tourism Sciences, at sshafer@tamu.edu or call 979.845.7324.
**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.
Social Media

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