We had the pleasure of hosting former RPTS student David Vela (‘82) shortly after he was nominated as the next Director of the National Park Service. Mr. Vela shares answers to some of the questions posed by our students during his visit. He remains on track to be confirmed as the 19th Director of the National Park Service and will be the first Latino to hold that position.

You’ll get a chance to meet two of our students in Ariel Marlowe and Ashley Browder. Ariel came to us from NC State (Wonder who he’ll pull for in the Gator Bowl?) and is working on a Masters degree. Ashley grew up right here in College Station and has been very engaged in multiple aspects of our program as an undergraduate.

There are good things happening in RPTS. We invite you to visit and see for yourself what a great faculty, staff and students we have. Both Ariel and Ashley point out how much they appreciate the family atmosphere and we’d like to extend that to you and yours. We had a good group at the 2nd annual tailgate event this October and we’re set for the 3rd prior to the Auburn game in 2019. Hope you’ll make plans to visit and catch up with friends and faculty – families welcome!

Happy holidays and may your 2019 be filled with great experiences!

Dr. Scott Shafer
Class of '80

As 2018 winds down we take this opportunity to share news from Recreation, Park and Tourism Sciences (RPTS). In the pages that follow you’ll see that Dr. John Crompton has received what some may feel is his greatest honor yet. He’s had a pub named after him! There is news about Dr. Lou Hodges’ 50 years of teaching and service to our department. Thank you Dr. Hodges! While the exact number is unknown, it is estimated that Lou has taught and worked with approximately 10,000 Aggies!
Kudos Dr. Crompton!

It all started in 1982 when Dr. John Crompton wrote an article in Parks and Recreation titled: "Why can't I get a beer when I go to the Recreation Center?"

Well ... 36 years later Crompton's Pub opened in the new multi-million dollar Epic Recreation Center in Grand Prairie, Texas.

The pub is Grand Prairie's way of recognizing Dr. Crompton's tremendous impact on Recreation, Park, and Tourism through his extensive work on positioning, marketing, and finance.

"Your health comes first. Overnighters are not worth it. They are not illustrative of your diligence; rather they are indicative of your failure to plan ahead."

Overnighters are not worth it. They are not illustrative of your diligence; rather they are indicative of your failure to plan ahead.
Thank you Dr. Hodges!

50 years with RPTS

Dr. Lou Hodges joined the Department of Recreation and Parks in 1968. We are happy that, after graduating from Rice University, he inquired about this new Texas A&M program. That inquiry set the course for the next 50 years.

He has been a beloved teacher influencing thousands of Aggies during their educational journey. Lou’s care for students has gone beyond the classroom as he has mentored many through personal challenges that helped them graduate.

His easy-going approach, handlebar moustaché and bolo tie have made him an icon in RPTS. Dr. Hodges, we thank you for a lifetime of service to our Department and the profession!

“If you are gonna be a bear be a grizzly.”
During a visit to RPTS, Mr. Vela had an opportunity to visit with students and addressed a number of their questions. Here is what he had to say:

Please tell us a little bit about yourself, your relationship with Texas A&M and the Department of Recreation, Park and Tourism Sciences (RPTS).

As a former resident of Wharton, Texas, I received my high school diploma from Wharton High School, and an Associate of Arts degree in Theater from Wharton County Junior College. I married my kindergarden classmate and high school sweetheart, Melissa, and we have celebrated over 38 years of marriage. We have two children (Christina and Anthony) who are also Texas A&M graduates, and six grandchildren. Anthony was a three-year letterman on the Aggie football team. Once I decided to pursue a career as a National Park Ranger, I started looking for universities with a strong park and recreation science curriculum. RPTS was a logical choice both then and now; they have a nationally recognized program, and have generated a large number of both state and national park rangers. In addition, Melissa had been accepted into TAMU, and graduated with a degree in Accounting.

Was it your dream to work in the National Park Service? What prompted you to pursue a Park Service career?

My journey through the National Park Service began on a trip to Yellowstone in the late 1960s. One of the stops along the way was to Grand Teton National Park where I now serve as the park’s Superintendent. As Latinos from rural Southeast Texas, national parks were a foreign concept to us. I had asked my parents one day why we made that trip and was informed that they had heard other people talk about their vacation experiences. It was a decision and trip that literally changed my life as a young teenager. We saw wildlife, mountain landscapes, and a National Park Ranger - I was hooked!
What would you like to accomplish as the leader of the National Park Service?

For nearly 30 years, I have strived to promote and ensure that the workforce of the National Park Service reflects the face of America and the communities that we serve. We have to make our agency relevant in the lives of all Americas so that they help to preserve and protect the units of the National Park System and serve as conservation stewards.

What challenges/failures have you faced during your career and how have you dealt with those to keep moving forward?

Over the course of 38 years of marriage with my wife, we have moved approximately ten times across this great country. I am one of the longest serving Senior Executives in the history of the National Park Service because Melissa said "yes" to every career opportunity that we were provided. Although she has shared in many memorable experiences, she has put her own career aspirations on hold. This has always been a concern of mine but I am truly blessed to have her loving support.

What advice would you give to current RPTS students as they consider a career in a government agency like the National Park Service?

Be patient, and make yourself marketable. Do not wait until graduation to apply for a job in the National Park Service without having volunteer and or seasonal work experiences under your belt. Also take advantage of research experiences in national parks to begin a network of contacts while an RPTS student. The facilities/maintenance and law enforcement arena provide more readily available opportunities. Large urban NPS units such as the National Mall and Memorial Parks in Washington, DC as well as units in New York, Philadelphia, and St. Louis also have large seasonal and permanent staff needs. Melissa and I and our two adult children greatly value our degrees and experiences from Texas A&M. In addition, we have raised two children and now six grandchildren in our national parks. We are truly blessed!

What do you appreciate about the National Park System?

What I value most are the friendships that I have developed over nearly 30 years in the National Park Service. In addition, the mission of the National Park Service - to protect our nation's most special places and to share our nation's most special stories.
Help readers know a little about you. Where are you from and what was your path to RPTS? What do you enjoy doing?

Howdy, I’m Ariel Marlowe and I am a 2nd year Masters student in the RPTS Department, and work as a Teaching Assistant for Rick Harwell. I am a native of North Carolina (Go Pack) and when not reading or grading, I enjoy biking, soccer, and the occasional bad joke. My path here began with the realization that I could use leisure activities to make people’s lives better.

Where do you see yourself in your future career? How would you connect it with your current studies?

I am sure my parents will be excited to read this answer as well. I believe I’d like to work within a company’s HR department as a Director of Activities, using leisure in/out of the workplace in order to help people live more holistically. Currently, my studies are focused on youth development and how it can be positively affected by leisure. Specifically, I am interested in looking at how the identity of young adults changes as they transition into professional roles.

What are some of the lessons you have learned through your experiences in the RPTS Department?

I’ve learned that you’re never alone, even when you feel so, at times. This Department has become such a big family for me and really contributed positively to my experience here. All you have to do is reach out, and people will run to help in any way they can.

What would be your advice for new students or those who might join us in the future?

My advice would be to find a way to be engaged in this community. Even if its eating in the lunch room with the office staff, working out at the Rec, or joining one of those groups you will certainly see at Rudder Plaza. Finding a way to make this huge campus feel a bit smaller will help immensely. Otherwise, enjoy your time, it goes by fast!
Help readers know a little about you. Where are you from and what was your path to RPTS? What do you enjoy doing?

I am the LOUDEST and the PROUDEST member of the Fightin’ Texas Aggie Class of 2019! A-WHOOP! I am a College Station native, born & raised! You don’t really meet a lot of people that are from here that choose to stay, but College Station is home. In my spare time I enjoy traveling with my daughter, Laila (class of 2031) and my mom. I also like watching scary movies and eating anything sweet. My path to RPTS started when I was in junior college at Blinn in Bryan and was ready to transfer to THE Texas A&M University. Everything about the RPTS Department was a perfect fit for my interest. Three years later, I have no regrets. The RPTS Department is small but we are like a family, from the students to the professors. I believe that is what I love most about this major because everyone knows everyone.

What are some of the lessons you have learned through your experiences in the RPTS Department?

I have learned a lot from my professors and from my colleagues. From my professors, I have learned to never give up and that it is o.k. to ask for help. Every single one of my professors has always been so encouraging and willing to help me in every way possible. From my colleagues, I have learned that it is o.k. to be different. I am 25 (few years older than everyone) and I have a daughter. From all the group projects, late study meetings and having to bring my daughter to class, my colleagues have been so accepting, understanding and have encouraged me to keep going.

Where do you see yourself in your future career? How would you connect it with your current studies?

I am currently pursuing my PEMC (Professional Event Management Certificate) so I am hoping that once I graduate I can do event operations for a professional or collegiate sports team.

What would be your advice for new students or those who might join us in the future?

Get to know your professors and colleagues beyond the classroom. We all have a love for RPTS and you’ll be surprised by the amount of support academically and personally you will receive once you get to know the real them. We are a big RPTS family.
On October 6\textsuperscript{th}, 2018 the Department of Recreation, Park and Tourism Sciences hosted the 2\textsuperscript{nd} annual RPTS Tailgate at the Student Recreation Center terrace!

We had the chance to meet current, former, and future students, their friends and families, and supporters of the RPTS Department!

There was plenty of food, amazing music by current RPTS student Blake Gossett’s band, "Boom Town Revival", and countless happy faces!
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:

We invite you to learn more about giving to the Department of Recreation, Park and Tourism Sciences. The webpage link below connects you to specific opportunities that benefit from 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.

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.