



10 Year Impact: Soltis Center for Research and Education

Dr. Suzanne Droleskey

10th Anniversary Assessment Goals

- Identify the impact the Center has had on the students, researchers, and the local community.
 - Determine whether the Center had met goals outlined in its mission and vision statements.
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Student Impacts

2,367 Aggie Participants

- Academic programs
- Research programs and projects
- Outreach activities
- Service Learning

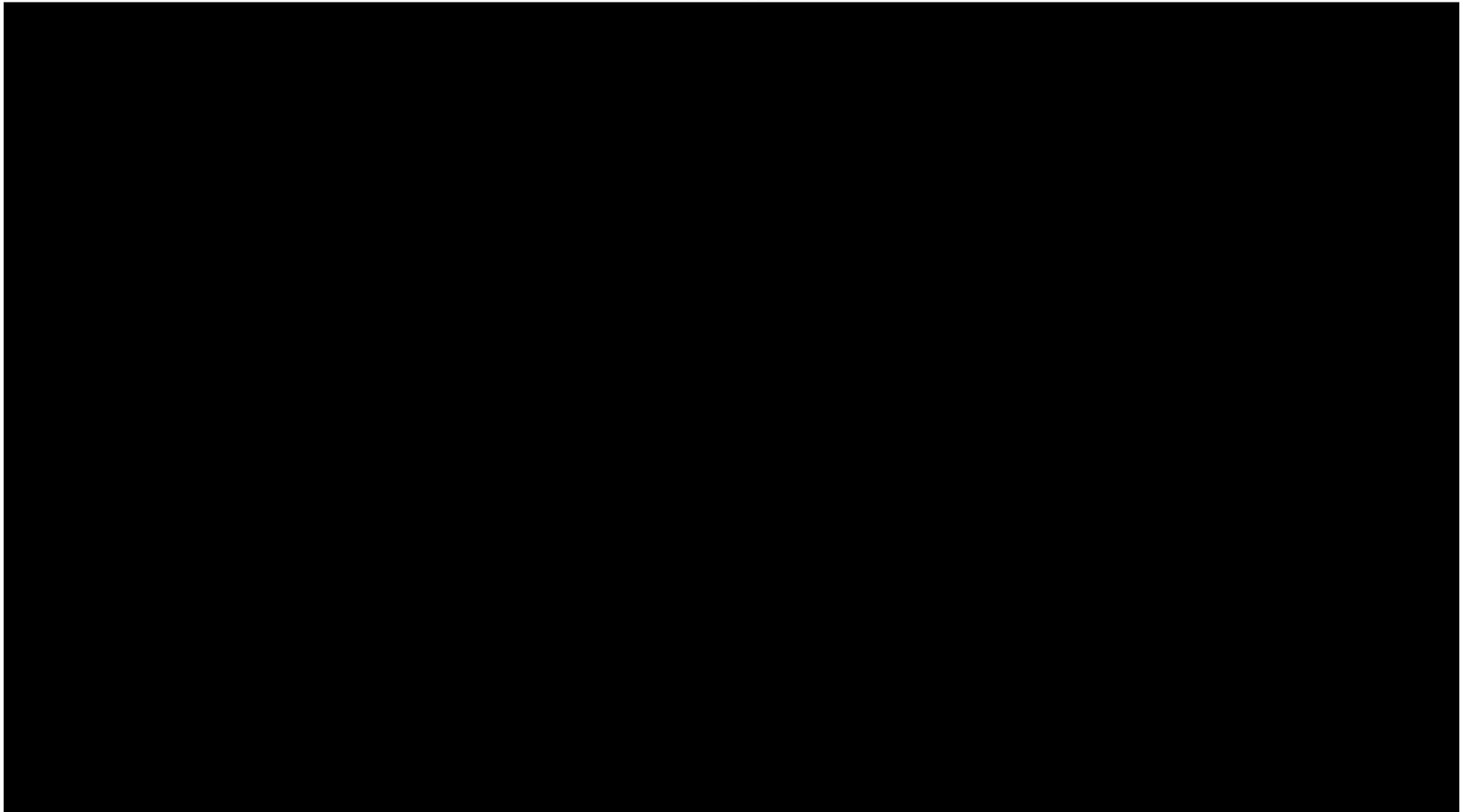
“This was one of the most life-changing trips I had ever been on. Not only did it foster a new sense of exploration and self-confidence, but it allowed me to implement some of the sustainability actions we learned and discussed in our abroad trip into my everyday life.”

Ten Year Survey Participant



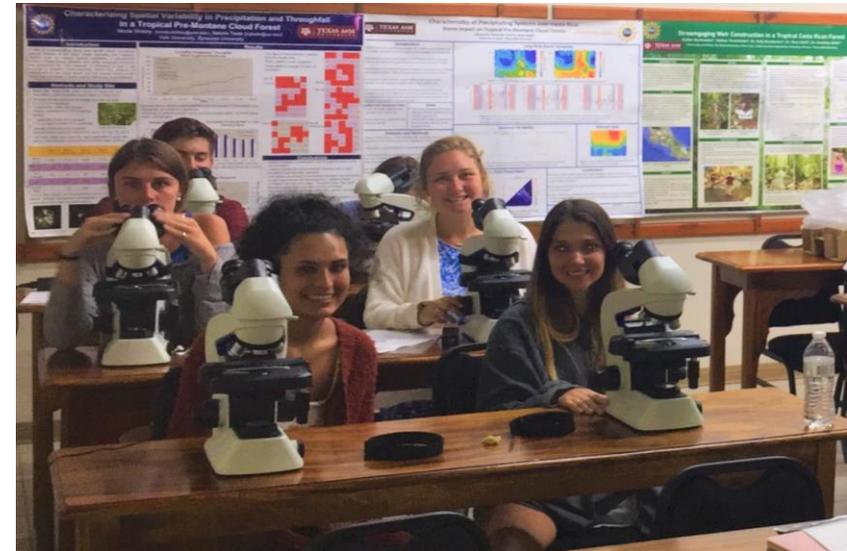
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Student Data Sources

- Observations of campus-based faculty using the Soltis Center
- Feedback from student surveys
 - * Soltis Center Logistics Survey
 - * The Memorial Student Center Student Survey
 - * International Research Experiences for Undergraduates (IREU) assessment
 - * Survey of Texas A&M Students from the Past Ten Years



10 Year Aggie Participant Survey

- 32% response rate (447 of the 1,381 valid email addresses)
- Representative sample of all programs/colleges/student levels/all years
- 69% trips less than 2 weeks
- 60% visited between 2009 and 2015

“During my study abroad at the Soltis Center, we learned about the levels of the forest and the interconnectedness of human interaction with the environment on climate changes, animal health, and human health. I have become more aware of nature within my own city back home: I look at how the trees grow, notice the birds chirping, and do not fear bugs quite so much.”

Ten Year Survey Participant

10 Year Aggie Participant Survey: My experience at Soltis ...

- 96% -- Improved my understanding the biodiversity of the planet
 - 94% -- Gained intercultural communication skills
 - 92% -- Encouraged to do additional study abroad
 - 84% -- Changed behaviors so they are more focused on sustainability
 - 84% -- Increased my engagement in environmental issues
 - 80% -- Increased my ability to be successful in the workplace
 - 74% -- Encouraged learning another language
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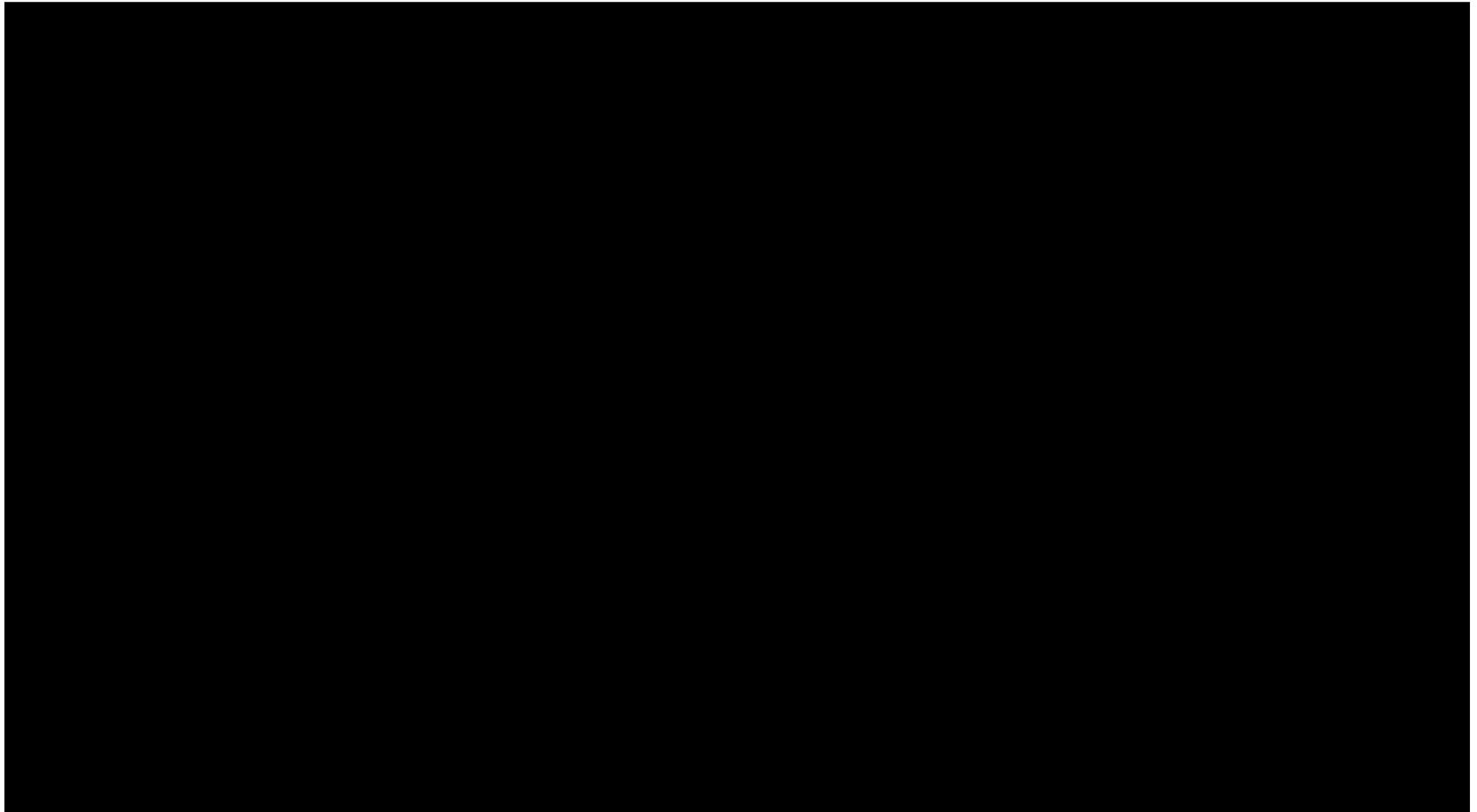


Research Impacts



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Research Impacts

- Publications/Presentations
 - 7 publications in scientific journals
 - 5 graduate theses and dissertations
 - 5 undergraduate theses projects
 - 3 scientific conference presentations/abstracts
 - 45 conference poster presentations, 9 of them REU generated research
- New Researchers
- Species Discoveries
 - in 2014, a new fly species (*Grallipeza Soltis*)
 - in 2019, a new species of the King Cricket (*Glaphyrosoa stephenosoltis*)



Research Impacts, cont'd

- Long Term Research Projects
 - Meteorological and Canopy Towers
 - Permanent Tree Plots
 - Weir Dam
 - Weather Station network
 - GIS database for the region
- Grant Funding > \$2M
- Multiplier Effect Research

“I was already pursuing a major in Geography, and not necessarily sustainability or environment-related work. But, my experiences at the Soltis Center still instilled the importance of research (I went on to pursue a Masters and PhD) and protecting our environment. I also became more physically active after my time at the Soltis Center, because I developed a passion for hiking and being out in nature more. I consider my visit at the Soltis Center as foundational to who I am now.”

Ten Year Survey Participant

Research Impacts, cont'd

- Partnerships
 - University of Costa Rica
 - National University of Costa Rica
 - Instituto Tecnológico de Costa Rica
 - Escuela Técnica Agrícola e Industrial
 - National Commission for Emergencies
 - Ministerio de Ciencia y Tecnología
 - Ministerio del Ambiente
 - Children's Eternal Rainforest
 - Organization for Tropical Studies
 - Monteverde Cloud Forest Reserve

“ . . . the professor in the College of Geosciences . . . told us multiple times that geoscientists see the world differently. For example, other people see the rainwater on campus go into a storm drain and don't give it a second thought. Geoscientists are thinking about the potential contaminants in the stormwater and if the increase of impervious surfaces on campus are increasing stormwater velocity and soil erosion, and to what degree. Doing research at the Soltis Center expanded on that geoscientist thought process to provide a more holistic picture that encompasses the ethics/equity aspect of sustainability.”

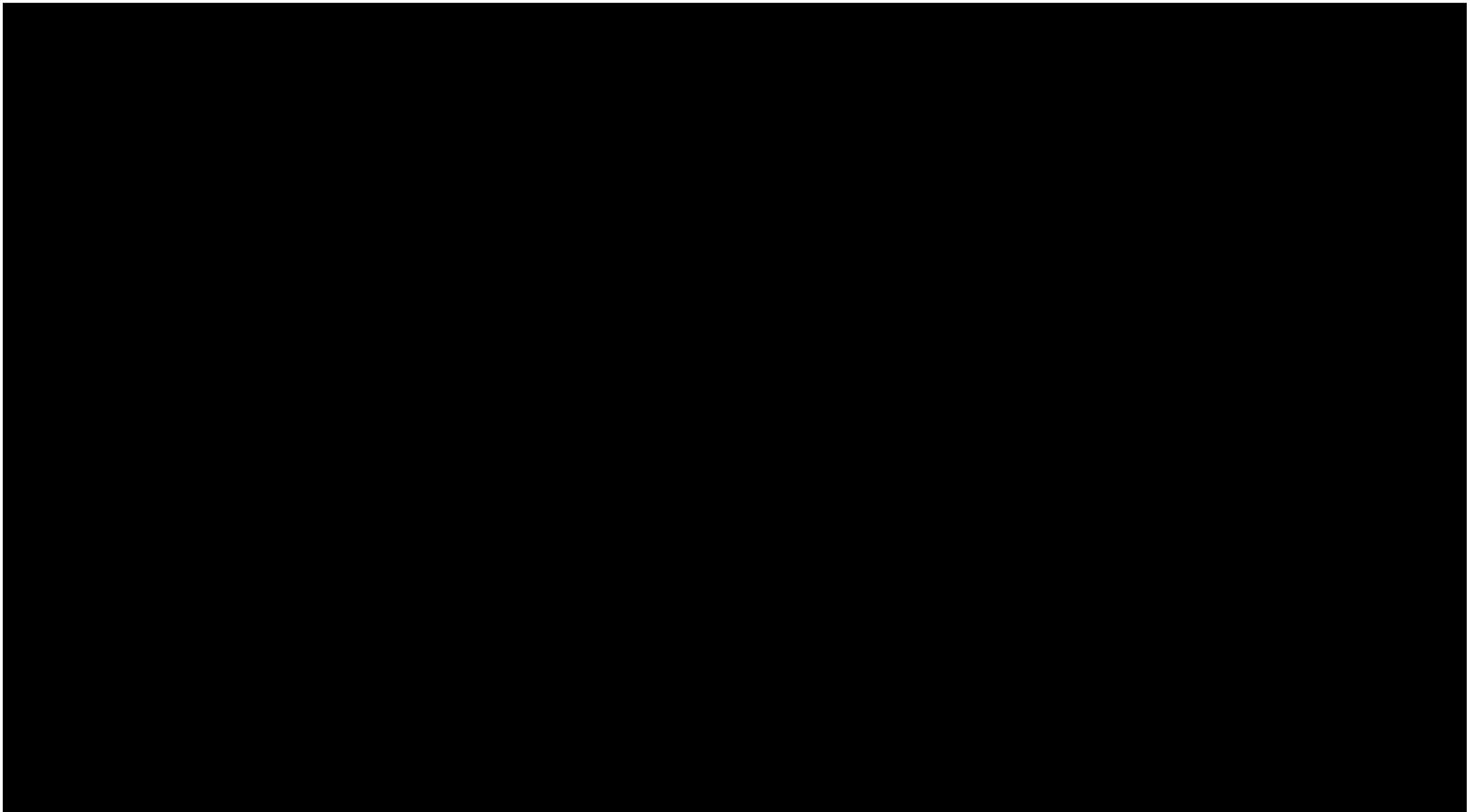
Ten Year Survey Participant



Local Impacts



Local Impacts



Local Community Impacts

- Local Programs
 - Science Fairs and Environmental programs
 - Cultural and dance programs
 - Meetings for local and regional government committees and activities
- Local Infrastructure
 - Improvements in paved roads, electricity, and internet connections
 - Collaborative problem solving
- Increased Tourism
- Employment and Educational Advancement

“The program taught me to consider the importance of how culture and terrain have a significant impact on policies and how government aid to other countries would be dependent on those items -- just because something works for you doesn't mean it will work for someone else. It's important to build trust and appreciate differences.”

Ten Year Survey
Participant

Local Community Impacts , cont'd

- Service/Volunteer Projects (sample)
 - building computer lab, rainfall water tank, greenhouse, and garden for local schools
 - Building a water tank and improved water pipe network for the community
 - landscaping at the community center
 - pouring foundations for soccer field dressing rooms
 - facilitating creation of a drainage ditch and a community tilapia fish pond
 - donating books to the school library
 - teaching bilingual and physical education classes

“We were able to volunteer at a week- long English class for the whole community and donate books for their classroom library. Since then, I have lived more consciously to the needs of our global community and how a little help and change go a long way.”

MSC FLI participant, Ten Year Survey

“My class group assisted in planting beans over an acreage of land by hand -- it was a rewarding experience -- teaching me appreciation for the produce I receive in the store.”

Participant, Ten Year Survey



Meeting the Vision and Mission

Soltis Center for Research and Education

Vision -- Provide enriching international experiences for Aggies while protecting the Center's unique ecology and creating greater awareness of the need for preservation of our natural heritage.

Mission -- Assist the internationalization of education, research, and outreach programs in support of the university's goals, and support the University's initiatives in Costa Rica and throughout Central America.



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“Creating global curiosity is what we’re really asking our administration to do. And I think it’s resulted in a site like the Soltis Center that provides students with backgrounds in different types of colleges with the opportunity to experience a different culture, a different setting, with different professors.”

Mr. Rey Spinelli, Chairman
of the International Board