The Haynes Ring Plaza, with its enormous bronze replica of an Aggie Ring, is certain to become a campus landmark.
Building the Future

An enhancement project for the Clayton W. Williams, Jr. Alumni Center will bring The Association of Former Students one step closer to achieving its vision of being the premier alumni organization in the country.

Watch Texas Aggie magazine, as well as The Association’s monthly E-Newsletter, for continuing updates about enhancements to the Clayton W. Williams, Jr., Alumni Center, or visit AggieNetwork.com/Building.
The 20-year-old building remains a great facility, but to continue to serve a former student and current student base that is much larger than when the building was first conceived, the overall functionality needs an update. A construction project to improve that functionality and provide numerous enhancements to the building began in early March.

The enhanced Clayton W. Williams, Jr. Alumni Center will provide a welcoming and engaging environment for prospective students, current students, former students, friends of A&M and their families. The Association’s home will tell the stories of the university’s proud past and reflect The Association’s commitment to Texas A&M’s future.

“We want this facility to represent the premier alumni association in the country,” said Association Executive Director Porter S. Garner III ’79. “It needs to accommodate and inspire all who work here and all who visit. It needs to reflect not only the mission but the legacy of former students. It needs to inspire The Association’s employees and A&M’s former students and the future generations of Texas Aggies. And we’re going to make sure that it does that on a daily basis.”

Garner said he feels strongly that the Williams Alumni Center is the best repository for displaying the comprehensive history of A&M and The Association. “There is now no single facility that represents in comprehensive fashion the entire 131-year history of Texas A&M and its former students, and I think that’s a travesty,” he said. “It’s a missed opportunity. The sports museum does a good job with athletic history, and the Corps museum does a good job with Corps history, but there is just no single facility that tells the whole story of Texas A&M and The Association of Former Students.”

Shelley E. Potter ’78, president-elect of The Association’s Board of Directors and chair of the Building Enhancement Task Committee, said the Williams Alumni Center is a tool for connecting the Aggie Network, whether in person or virtually, and for bringing to life the
core values of what it means to be an Aggie. “It should serve as a welcoming and engaging environment for prospective students, current students, former students and their families ... a ‘must see’ destination on any visit to campus.”

Potter said that, in addition to enhancing the most visible features of the Alumni Center, the transformation will require behind-the-scenes improvements to such items as mechanical systems, security, sprinkler systems, technology and fire alarms to ensure the safety and continued enjoyment of the facility.

“It is an ambitious project, but we feel that it meets the current and future needs of The Association and enhances our ability to fulfill our vision of being the premier alumni organization in the country,” Potter said. “Our building has served us well for 20 years, but with the incredible growth and changes in the way we operate, it must do more.”

Funding

No university or other public funds and no money from The Association’s Annual Fund are being used for the building enhancement project. Annual Fund dollars support a wide spectrum of student, staff and faculty activities, and that support will continue. The leadership of The Association is committed to a separate capital fundraising campaign for the building project.

The project costs, including architectural and engineering fees, furniture, technology, and branding, are estimated at $12 million, which includes reserves for additional maintenance and operations. The Association staff, as well as Board members and volunteers, are being called upon to cultivate and solicit the needed funds.

All former students are encouraged to help fund these enhancements. For information about becoming a donor, contact Barbara Kasper ‘82 at (979) 845-7514 or at bkasper82@AggieNetwork.com.

Background

Research and discussions related to enhancing the building began back in 1997, after The Association launched a major market research project to determine why participation in The Association was not growing at the same rate as the number of
Texas A&M graduates. Through that study and subsequent research over the following decade, The Association learned that it was not maximizing the use and messaging opportunities of one of its largest assets, that crowding of office spaces was leading to inefficiencies that needed to be addressed, and that the atmosphere did not showcase the programs and projects that are supported daily by The Association.

In September 2003, The Association engaged the services of leading worldwide architecture firm Gensler to study the existing and adjacent properties, review the building entrance and interior space, and evaluate current and future office space needs and efficiency. The Board of Directors’ Building Enhancement Task Committee met with Gensler as well as staff numerous times to review the design elements.

The analysis, visioning, programming and schematic design phases of the project culminated on Nov. 3, 2006, when schematic designs were presented to and approved by the Board. As designed, the enhancements will add about 12,460 square feet of interior space to the building.

**Raising The Goosebumps**

Garner said that in a general sense, the alumni center is every former student’s home at Texas A&M, and it should be a focal point for the unshakable pride that Aggies have for their school.

“That pride needs to start swelling the closer you get to this facility,” he said. “You park in the lot, come up through the Haynes Ring Plaza, see all the quotes, and it builds to a crescendo so that once you enter Flores Hall, you are just overwhelmed with pride. As you go up those stairs to the mezzanine level and navigate the precious history of A&M and The Association of Former Students, there ought to be a tingle as you swell up with pride. And as you leave, there ought to be a sustaining feeling of pride as well. This building ought to be a constant representation of the unshakable Spirit of Aggieland. That spirit is not tied to a winning or losing football team. It’s tied to Muster, it’s tied to Silver Taps, and it’s tied to all the core values of Texas A&M, which are going to reflect and be forever emoted by the fact they are engraved in stone.”

Harold Haynes ’46, the project’s lead donor, also cited A&M’s core values when discussing his affection for the university.

“A&M gave me a real good, solid foundation, not only in the education process, but also in learning discipline and moral values,” he said. “Those are things that still mean a lot to me and that I trace to A&M. What I learned there at A&M really serves to this day as the foundation for my moral and ethical values.”

Garner noted that the Clayton W. Williams, Jr. Alumni Center is the only building on campus that 98 percent of undergrad students will visit during their career at A&M, because it’s where students order and then receive their Aggie Rings.

“When you consider that 98 percent, the obligation becomes pretty stark,” Garner said. “I think we have an opportunity here to inspire 98 percent of our students by telling them their history and by displaying their Aggie heritage. Before they leave this campus, they know what that Ring means and the symbolism behind it. They know the story of the ‘42 Muster that put us on the map. They know who Earl Rudder was. They know who Lawrence Sullivan Ross was. They see the Corregidor flag. They can access oral histories. Whether it’s the branding of Bevo or the finding of Reveille or the story of Law Hall, we’re going to bring it to life.

“Educating, inspiring and motivating future generations of Texas Aggies ... now, that’s impact. And if impacting 98 percent of every graduating class isn’t inspiration enough, I don’t know what is.”