HRI’s Endowment & Early History

The Harte Research Institute (HRI) for Gulf of Mexico Studies is a young and developing institute at Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi.

On Sept 19, 2000, Mr. Edward H. Harte donated $46 million to establish the new research institute to focus on the Gulf of Mexico. Mr. Harte, philanthropist and former owner of the Corpus Christi Caller-Times newspaper, worked with Dr. Robert R. Furgason, then President of TAMU-CC, to establish the endowment to include endowed research chairs, endowed graduate research fellowships and an endowed operating budget. Subsequently, during the fall of 2000, the Harte Research Support Foundation was established to manage the assets until the institute is fully established and operative.

The Foundation consists of three Trustees: Mr. Ed Harte, Mr. Jonathan M. Hornblower and Mr. David L. Sinak. In the spring of 2001 during the Texas Legislative Session, Dr. Furgason was able to obtain $15 million from the State of Texas to build a facility for the Harte Research Institute on the TAMU-CC campus. An additional $3 million was added to that amount from other state building funds to allow for the construction of four graduate instruction and research laboratories.

These labs and offices allow collaboration between Harte research scientists and faculty and students within the TAMU-CC College of Science and Technology. Other colleges and entities at TAMU-CC working cooperatively and collaboratively with HRI include the:

- Center for Coastal Studies
- Center for Water Supply Studies
- Conrad Blucher Institute for Surveying and Science
- Geographic Information Science research program
- Texas Coastal Ocean Observation Network

Mr. Ed Harte, who had been Chairman of the Board for
the National Audubon Society during the 1970s, and again in the early 1990s, was inspired by the book *Sea Change* written by the renowned oceanographic explorer Dr. Sylvia Earle (1995) in deciding to endow and establish the research institute. After meetings and discussions between Mr. Harte, President Furgason and Dr. Earle, she agreed to become Chair of the Advisory Council for the new institute during the summer of 2001. During that summer, and the following academic year, a highly distinguished Advisory Council was established. Members represent academia, industry, and conservation, as well as all three countries surrounding the Gulf of Mexico, United States, Mexico, and Cuba.

Dr. John W. ("Wes") Tunnell, Jr. was appointed Associate Director in September 2001, and that fall the new institute was officially named the Harte Research Institute for Gulf of Mexico Studies. Over the next several years the organization and structure of HRI was developed, the research areas were determined and the building was constructed. In January 2005, Dr. Robert Furgason became the first HRI Executive Director. The first of two endowed chairs were hired that summer, and the new building was occupied in November 2005.