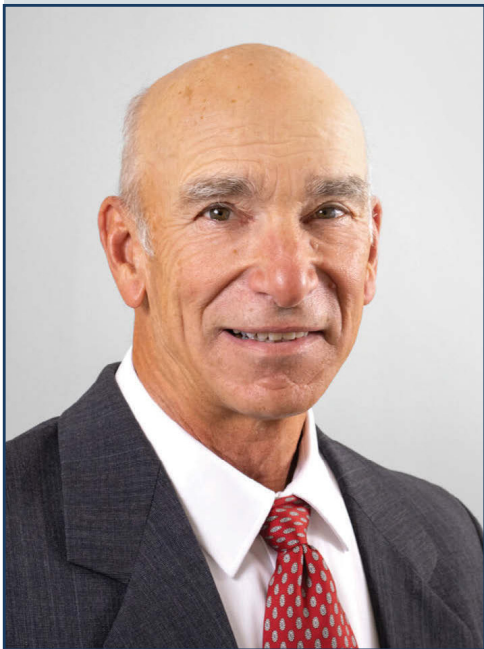


# Distinguished Alumni Award Winner

## **DOUGLAS STARK**

By Micaela Myers

Douglas Stark grew up in Riverton, Wyo., and worked in road construction after high school. Like many young people, he decided to attend the University of Wyoming to better his job prospects — a move that paid off. After earning his degree in agricultural business in 1980, he joined Farm Credit Services of America, which provides agricultural credit, risk management



and financial services to farm and ranch operators in Nebraska, Iowa, South Dakota, Kansas and Wyoming. He culminated a 37-year career there, ultimately serving as president and chief executive officer from 2005 until his retirement in 2017. Under his leadership, the financial cooperative's assets grew from \$9.7 billion to \$25.8 billion in 2017, and its annual net income grew

from \$144 million to \$514 million from 2005 to 2017. He has testified before Congress several times and was instrumental in leading the development of an innovative nationwide trade credit program for agricultural machinery and equipment.

“It was a really rewarding career,” Stark says. “I love the field of agriculture. I loved helping people be able to reach their goals and achieve their dreams. The farmers and ranchers we served were outstanding people.”

Throughout his career and in his retirement, Stark has continued to give back to his alma mater, facilitating collaboration on research and outreach projects between UW and Farm Credit Services of America; co-teaching a leadership class in the College of Agriculture, Life Sciences and Natural Resources; and working to help establish the first minor in leadership at UW. He also serves on the Agriculture Dean's Advisory Board and the UW Foundation Board of Directors. Because of these efforts, he received the Agricultural Outstanding Alumni Award in 2013. His wife, Deniz, is also a UW alum (B.S., '84, agricultural business), and they live on their ranch north of Shawnee, Wyo.

“I felt UW was a pivotal point in my life and career,” Stark says. “There are so many opportunities if students will look at their college education as that pivotal experience — that platform to propel them into an exciting future. That's what keeps me motivated and giving back to UW.”

Stark made some of his best friends at UW — friends he's still in touch with today. He tells students that life after college is like a big room full of doors that open to many possibilities. Your degree gets you into that first big room, but there are many rooms and doors to follow.

“If you're really pursuing the best of yourself, opportunities are going to come your way,” he says, “sometimes before you think you're ready. That's what I found in the course of my career. I had opportunities to advance and do different things. The college education prepares you for that, but there are many opportunities that lie ahead for you.”

For Stark, winning the Distinguished Alumni Award is humbling and a symbol of his ongoing efforts at the university. “It's quite an honor to win this award,” he says. “I certainly didn't expect it. It's very gratifying to see that the things I have done and am doing at the university are appreciated.”

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