

# TRANSCRIPT: TODD D. STAPLES INTERVIEW

Todd D. Staples · Texas Commissioner of Agriculture

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## TRANSCRIPT

Interview with Mr. Douglas Todd Staples, Current Texas Commissioner of Agriculture. Staples is a 1984 graduate from Texas A&M and an inducted member of the Tyrus R. Timm Honor Registry.

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Could you please introduce yourself and tell us a little about your career?

Todd Staples, Fightin' Texas Aggie Class of 1984 and the current Commissioner of Agriculture. I had a great experience at Aggieland, gave me ideas and concepts that were new to a guy from rural East Texas, but it's been a great experience. And was privileged to be involved in the private sector, helped my family get a retail plant nursery going, expand my family cow calf operation that I'm still involved in today, and get involved in the real estate business, real estate appraisal & real estate brokerage. And I very highly value my role in the private sector, but I've also been privileged to serve in the public sector as well. As matter of fact, when I was 25 years old, my high school Ag teacher called me on a Saturday morning and said we want you to run for City Council. I politely told him no thanks, that I was trying to get a business going and family going, and I just set this one out. And he got kind of quiet on the phone and said we gave to you and it's time for you to give back. And so, I told him what we all tell our former Ag teachers, I said yes sir. And I was fortunate enough to serve on my Palestine City Council. My neighbors wanted me to run for State Representative. I served in the Texas House for six years and served in the Texas Senate for six years, and now, I've been published to serve as the Texas Commissioner of Agriculture. It's a great honor and my private sector experience has helped me greatly to ensure that government is respons – responsive to those that it serves.

Why did you decide to study Agricultural Economics?

You know, when I came to Aggieland, I was an accounting major, my brother was a CPA, I grew up on a cow calf operation. It was hard work and didn't seem like it was very profitable a lot of times. And, and I did not know about Agricultural Economics when I came to Aggieland. And I came, and I listened to some of my friends who were involved in Ag Economics and the curriculum where you studied the agriculture, but you studied also business concepts. And that greatly appealed to me. And so, I switched to an Ag Eco major after my first semester and just absolutely love the interaction with the professor's, love being around people who understood and appreciated what agriculture was all about, but also learned the economics and the business components of agriculture and how they intermeshed. And it's benefited me tremendously, not only in my private sector experience but as a public servant, to make certain that policies have consequences and decisions we make have consequences. And my economics background has been a fabulous benefit to me personally and professionally.

What activities at Texas A&M most influenced your career?

Well, since we're on the record I think I will officially say the different types of classes was very good and beneficial to me. Macroeconomic theory, talking about what was going on in our nation, in our nation's economy, and the government's response agricultural policy. Agricultural economics classes and land economics classes, those all helped me tremendously. And then interacting with students and professors and having – being taught by people who knew the business, who had real world experience, and knew the difficulties of farming and ranching, and how difficult it is to provide our food source that we have was, was extremely beneficial for me.

What are your thoughts on being inducted to the Tyrus R. Timm Honor Registry?

Well, it's a tremendous honor and one that I, I never thought I would be considered for. So, it's a very humbling experience when you consider the legacy of Dr. Timm and what he meant to this program and what he meant to students. And I, I think of anything, that's the message that, that we need to carry forward in honoring his memory. And honoring those that teach and give over and above what the minimum is required. Is that this is something about giving back, and that's what we need to all remember is that we need to give back. We've been very blessed and very fortunate. Been blessed to be born in America, really blessed to be born in Texas. And we need to give back and we need to make certain that other students have those opportunities and that's what it means to me.

How have you managed to balance time for family, work, and other commitments?

Well, family's first and I think that's what it's all about. And my faith guides me as well, but I think we need to understand that it's a balance in what we do. We need to ensure that our family's taken care of, and sometimes the best ways we can take care of our families is to be good providers and make certain that they have opportunities. My mother and dad were both hard-working folks, and they worked hard and instilled values. And us values that we care for our family, but we also have to be responsible in the positions that we've been given.

What advice do you have for a student unsure of career interests?

Students entering Texas A&M and their educational experience, my advice to give them is work hard. Take advantage of opportunities. Don't think something's going to come to you, you have to go get it. And as, and as blessed as you might have been and as easy as things have may have come to you, always remember that you have to work. And the things that you do are a reflection on those around you, they are a reflection on Aggies that have already gone through what you've done, and they are a reflection on things and Aggies to be. And so, I think that's an important thing that we need to keep in mind is that you're carrying on the heritage and a legacy that people have fought and died for. And it's our responsibility to carry that legacy forward.

Is there anything else that you would like to tell viewers?

I think we need to always keep in mind that success is a journey, not a destination. And we need to always think how we can make life better. We need to keep the spirit of Aggieland alive and well. And then make certain that we are recognized as a campus and as a Former Students Association and current students, of people who give back, of people who want to make things better than they were when they found them. One of my first visits to Texas A&M, I went through the Memorial Student Center, and I stumbled across the floor that at that time housed all the citations of medal of honor recipients and read the stories of how Aggies gave their life in many instances to make life better. And I think we need to keep in mind that we

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**always need to give back, need to give back in a positive way to make Texas, America, and Aggieland a place that we can all be proud of.**

Thanks for listening

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