Jeremy Witte has been an active participant in New Mexico State University programs, the community and the state as a whole. His enthusiasm has a profound and lasting impact.

Jeremy will receive a Bachelor of Science in Agriculture, Agricultural Economics and Agricultural Business with a minor in economics, business administration and marketing. Jeremy excels in scholarship, leadership and service.

Throughout his time at NMSU, Jeremy has worked on numerous research projects including with the Collegiate Advisory Board of the Federal Reserve Bank of Dallas, Farm Credit of New Mexico and two NMSU /National Agri-Marketing Association (NAMA) marketing teams. His work has garnered numerous awards including the Regent’s Success Scholarship, Outstanding ASNMSU Senator, Mayors Top Ten and NAMA Outstanding Member. He has been named on the Dean’s List and the Doña Ana 4-H Hall of Fame.

Jeremy served as the campaign manager for Andy Nunez, executive director of Governmental Affairs for ASNMSU and student assistant for the NMSU Government Relations Department and currently serves as ASNMSU Vice President. His dedication did not stop there. He has served as an NMSU Presidential Ambassador, a member of the College Republicans and as the NAMA president. He has also devoted his time to Cowboys for Cancer Research, 4-H, The Big Event and Keep State Great.

Jeremy’s parents, Jeff and Janet Witte, are both graduates of NMSU.
Cole Tobin

“Cole is a deep thinker and hard worker, but also charming and engaging person who is a pleasure to have as a student. He is well liked by his professors and peers and has the potential for stellar performance at the graduate level” - Miriam S. Chaiken, Ph.D., William Conroy Honors College Dean

Cole Tobin will receive a Bachelor of Arts in Anthropology and a Bachelor of Science in Biology, minoring in biochemistry.

Throughout Cole’s time at NMSU he maintained a 4.0 in Anthropology and a 3.8 in Biology, all while completing coursework his professors say was exceptional for its depth and breadth. Cole is a HHMI fellow in the Biology Department and has studied bird warbles and sexual reproduction of male budgies with Dr. Tim Wright. Cole also assisted Dr. Brenda Benefit with behavioral observations of siamangs at the El Paso Zoo, among many other areas of research.

Cole has been a Crimson Scholar for six semesters and made the Dean’s List for five semesters. He received the Dora Blossom Gile Endowed Memorial Scholarship and the Undergraduate Scholarship from the Biology Department in 2014. He also received the Air Force Aid Society General Henry H. Arnold Education Grant from 2011 to 2014.

Cole devotes what spare time he has to community service, most recently serving as a Sierra Middle School Science Day Volunteer, leading an activity with students that correlated parrot body size with song variation. Cole will be entering into the University of Missouri’s Ph.D program in Anthropology.

Cole’s parents, Jim and Denise Eck, both reside in Albuquerque.
Amanda Ball will receive her Bachelor of Science in Agriculture and a Bachelor of Business Administration in Management. Throughout her academic career, Amanda was named a President’s Associate Excellence Scholar, a prestigious four year scholarship program. She was also named a Crimson Scholar and was on the Dean’s List from 2011 to 2015. She has maintained a 4.0 despite her busy academic and volunteer schedule.

Amanda held a formal leadership position in Agricultural Communicators of Tomorrow and Collegiate FFA. She was voted an emerging leader by her peers in management courses and continually attended national and regional conferences. She was a Summer Leadership Camp Director, a past FFA Officer Reunion Committee Chair, and Nominating Committee Chair for the state FFA officer selection process.

Amanda works to better communities both near and far. She participated in the International Volunteer HQ three week teaching program in Cape Town, South Africa and she has been a Senior Lunch Program Volunteer at the Mesilla Park Community Center every week since 2013. She was an Oklahoma FFA Leadership Camp Small Group Leader and received the President’s Volunteer Service Gold Award.

Amanda was the owner and operator of Annie May’s Homemade Jelly, a business she ran in high school and college. She established Ball Enterprises, LLC and earned a food processing permit from the state of New Mexico. In her advanced role, she was responsible for all aspects of the business including production, marketing, inventory, accounting, sales, and distribution.

Amanda’s parents, John and Pamela Ball, reside in Edgewood, NM.
College of Education

Scheryiah Romero

“Scheryiah’s ability to participate in campus activities and service, maintain her grades, and juggle schoolwork and an active student life is a measure of her determination, enthusiasm, and discipline” - Linda J. Spencer, Ph.D. SLP

Scheryiah Romero will receive her degree in Communication Disorders with a minor in Linguistics. Because of a strong work ethic she says has been instilled in her since childhood, she has maintained a 3.954 GPA, and a 3.967 in her field of study. She has been named a Crimson Scholar since 2011, and been on the Dean’s Honor List since 2012.

Scheryiah has had many opportunities and responsibilities that have heightened her desire to continue her education and pursue a career as a Speech-Language Pathologist. She has been an active member of the NMSU National Student Speech Language Hearing Association since 2012. During that time, she served as Vice President of Activities. She has also devoted much of her time assisting Dr. Alfred Valdez in his research work in the area of cognitive theory and educational technology.

Scheryiah is actively involved in various honor societies. Since 2011 she has been most active in the Phi Eta Sigma National Honor Society, serving as secretary of the NMSU chapter for two consecutive terms. Additional volunteer commitments Scheryiah has maintained throughout her academic career include Keep State Great, The Big Event, after school enrichment at Hillrise Elementary School, and Convoy for Hope among many others.

Scheryiah’s parents, Angela and Julian Romero, reside in Capitan, NM.
Daniel Franco

“Daniel is an excellent student who has showed exceptional leadership in his time here at NMSU, and he will clearly be a very high-profile professional throughout his career” - J. Phillip King, P.E., Ph.D., Associate department Head, Department of Civil Engineering

Daniel Franco will receive his degree in Civil Engineering with a minor in Math. The Crimson Scholar since 2012 has considerable engineering work and research experience, and has received multiple academic and extracurricular scholarships.

Daniel received the full-ride Daniels Fund Scholarship as well as the Chi Epsilon; Jesse B. Lunsford; Maugh J. Brown; Ralph W. Goddard; Regents Success; Samuel P. Maggard; Sony; and Dr. Harrington Scholarships. The impressive awards show Daniel is dedicated both to academics and the community, and are only matched by the accolades he receives from his department.

While attending school and participating in a variety of research projects, Daniel served as the editor of the NMSU Student Chapter of the American Society of Civil Engineers; Co-Captain of the Concrete Canoe Team; and Officer (Marshall) of the Chi Epsilon Civil Engineering Honor Society.

Daniel is a dedicated student and community member. He has organized and volunteered events like The Big Event, Keep State Great, MathCounts, The Whole Enchilada Festival, Volleyball for Victims, and Cyclovia just to name a few.

Daniel’s professional goal is to become a licensed professional engineer. He has been admitted into the Master’s Degree Program at NMSU and will continue studying civil engineering.

Daniel’s parents, Manuel and Vicenta Franco, reside in Hobbs, NM.
Maria Denise Van Der Ben

“The Department of Public Health Sciences proudly chose Maria Denise Van Der Ben because of her outstanding scholarship. When one considers that she is involved in the NMSU women’s tennis team, this feat is even more impressive. Throughout her course work and other activities she has demonstrated commitment to promoting mental health and other health initiatives within the NMSU community” -Dr. Mark Kittleson, Department head

Maria Denise Van Der Ben, who calls The Netherlands home, will graduate in May with a degree in public health from the College of Health and Social Services. She is a member and captain of the New Mexico State University women’s tennis team and has a 3.91 GPA.

She has been a Crimson Scholar for seven semesters, named to both the WAC and the Intercollegiate Tennis Association All-Academic teams for three years and been on the NMSU Dean’s list for her academic achievements.

In addition to her involvement with the tennis team, Maria has been active in several programs within the college. These include serving as a college ambassador and participating in Healthy Aggie Week as an outreach component of her class work. She distributed information related to depression and designed and administered a short survey on this subject to assess campus attitudes and knowledge about depression.

She has worked as a peer educator through the campus health center. In that capacity she developed health education materials and assisted in promoting health programs and events for students, faculty and staff.
Graduate School

Master’s Degree

Brendan P. Sullivan ‘11,’14

“Brendan Sullivan is an excellent student and researcher. He has been especially active as a representative of the department and the College of Engineering at research conferences including the Society for Hispanic Professional Engineers and was honored with the outstanding research award at the Mexican American Engineers and Scientists Conference” - Dr. Edward Pines, Industrial engineering department head

Brendan P. Sullivan, of Las Cruces, will receive a Master of Science degree in industrial engineering. He is also working on the systems engineering certificate.

Brendan served as the NMSU project lead for the Partners for the Advancement of Collaborative Engineering Education (PACE) program where graduate and undergraduate students work on an industry centric project for General Motors designing, engineering and manufacturing a motorized vehicle. Students worked in international virtual engineering teams to design a portable assisted mobility device and earned a trip to Turin, Italy, for the competition.

Brendan is known to have an incredible ability to integrate innovative educational technologies within engaging learning environments designed to retain and advance underrepresented students to excel as future scientists and engineers.

Currently a NCIIA/Venturewell University Innovation Fellow, VP Institute of Industrial Engineers, and member of Tau Beta Pi as well as Alpha Pi Ma were he serves as Secretary. He also works at the Arrowhead Center as a Technology Associate. From 2012-2014 he was a member of the NMSU Model United Nations student team which won several awards at the annual gathering in New York City, including outstanding delegation, position paper and delegate. He is a member of several professional organizations and frequently volunteers his time to serve as a judge for STEM competitions in the area.

This will be the fourth degree Brendan has earned at New Mexico State University and he is applying for the PhD program in industrial engineering.
Graduate School

Doctorate

Nikole (Nikki) Nielsen ‘13

“Nikki Nielsen is a very confident and bright student who has blossomed into a very productive scientist in her years in graduate school. It has been a pleasure to see her mature and demonstrate mastery in her field, not only of her own work but also of its context and of the relevant results in the literature”-
Rene Walterbos, Professor, Department of Astronomy

Nikki Nielsen will receive her Ph.D in astronomy at the May 2015 Commencement exercises for New Mexico State University. She has been named the outstanding Ph.D graduate by the NMSU Alumni Association.

After earning her bachelor’s degree in astrophysics at Michigan State University, she enrolled at NMSU for her graduate studies. She earned a master of science in astronomy in December 2013. Her thesis presented her research findings at international, national and regional conferences, earning high praise at each. She has also authored or co-authored several scholarly papers.

During her years as a graduate student at NMSU, she has received several research fellowships from the university and the National Science Foundation.

Within the department she served as a teaching assistant for Dr. Christopher Churchill and has been active in the Astronomy Graduate Student Organization. She has been the outreach coordinator for the department and participated in several astronomy and star gazing nights at area schools and museums.

She has already accepted a postdoctoral fellowship at the Centre for Astrophysics and Supercomputing at the Swinburne University of Technology in Melbourne, Australia. Her professors believe Nikki’s research has enhanced NMSU’s status on the international scene.
Claudia Higuera-Medina, who was born in Sinaloa, Mexico, has been named the outstanding international graduate for the May 2015 commencement at New Mexico State University. She moved with her family to Deming, NM, in 1992, and graduated with honors from Deming High School in 2007. The fourth of five children raised by a single mother, she is the first in her family to attend college. Higuera-Medina received associate degrees in general studies and pre-architecture from Doña Ana Community College in 2010.

After earning those associate degrees, Claudia determined that she wanted a profession where she could assist others but was uncertain about how to proceed. During an unexpected encounter with her childhood caseworker, she spoke of her desire to refocus her life’s goals. Their conversation led Higuera-Medina to explore the field of social work. She saw that this field would allow her to empower others in similar ways.

Higuera-Medina has worked in different jobs while continuing her education. She also has been involved in school activities. She received the Outstanding Graduate Award in 2010 from DACC and has been a Crimson Scholar since 2012. She also has been active in the Social Work Student Association at NMSU, helping to organize fund raising events for agencies in the community and on campus.

She is currently completing an internship at Doña Ana County Headstart in Las Cruces.