



**2025**  
**NEW MEXICO STATE UNIVERSITY**  
**DISTINGUISHED ALUMNI**  
**COLLEGE OF ACES**

## EDWARD M. AVALOS '74, '96



**“Be humble and kind, and don’t just think about yourself. Be like a farmer: A few people produce so much benefit to so many more.”**

—Edward M.  
Avalos '74, '96

**A**s a boy growing up in the Mesilla Valley, Edward M. Avalos' '74, '96 — who goes by “Eddard” — harvested onions and cotton, fed cattle, and unloaded grain trucks alongside his siblings and his parents on a farm owned by Clyde and Reba Simpson. Early on as a farm worker, Eddard says, “I learned the value of hard work and commitment.”

Fast forward to 2008: President Barack Obama nominates Eddard to be Under Secretary for Marketing and Regulatory Programs for the U.S. Department of Agriculture. Serving from 2009 – 2016, Eddard managed a \$6 billion budget, shaped policy, and led international negotiations at the highest levels.

NMSU, Eddard says, put him on this path: “NMSU made it possible for this kid from Las Cruces to someday lead in-person meetings with the presidents of Mexico, Peru, Chile, and Uruguay on official United States business.”

But — Eddard credits his friend Demetrio Ortega with getting him to NMSU in the first place.

By his senior year in high school, Eddard knew all about NMSU basketball and football, but had no idea how to enroll as a student. Demetrio and his sister Ludy guided him through the application process, from taking the ACT to scholarship applications. According to Eddard, Demetrio, a fellow ag student, “was high achieving, studious, and disciplined — everything I was not. But he would give me his notes and prep me for exams. He kept me in school and made sure I graduated!”

Eddard did excel at a lively social life, from athletics events to TKE fraternity parties to “dumping people in Aggie Pond.” His professors, especially Drs. Boyce Williams and Clarence Watson, “checked on me regularly and treated me like family.”

He says the most important things he learned at NMSU to advance his career were people skills: “I always wanted to be in ag, but my family didn’t have a farm, I didn’t want to peddle chemicals, and I wasn’t a researcher. But I found what I was good at: effective communication.”

While at NMSU, communication skills landed Eddard a student internship at the New Mexico Department of Agriculture that eventually turned into a 15-year tenure as Director of Marketing and Development. While there, he masterminded the New Mexico Taste the Tradition® campaign.

Working on behalf of farmers, ranchers, processors, distributors, retailers, and consumers at NMDA and USDA were Eddard’s “dream jobs.” He says, “I’m proud to have been a public servant. At home, I promoted chile and pecans, organic foods, agritourism, and farmers markets. Internationally, I helped develop markets worldwide, product standards, international protocols, and sanitary certifications.”

Now retired, Eddard likes “to just sit back and watch the tractors and the workers harvesting crops.” But he also enjoys offering guidance to students embarking on their careers: “Don’t forget where you came from and don’t get greedy. Be humble and kind, and don’t just think about yourself. Be like a farmer: A few people produce so much benefit to so many more.” ▲