

CLASS OF 2025

Outstanding Graduate



SEAN SCHIFANO

Graduate School, Master's

Sean Schifano is graduating with a Master of Arts in Public History. After receiving his bachelor's in history from the University of North Alabama, he studied the history of plant and vegetation ecology at Johns Hopkins University. However, a Smithsonian Institution internship rerouted his interest toward museums and archives — which led him to NMSU.

“NMSU’s strong and constant support of my graduate degree work helped me to lay a foundation for preserving community memory.”

Sean’s work has focused on archiving materials from modern claimants to converso descent; that is, historically Jewish Iberian families who converted to Catholicism to avoid persecution. In January 2024, he founded the Converso Legacy Archives (CLA), the first systematic effort to gather and preserve materials pertaining to this population in the American Southwest and Mexico. In November 2024, New Mexico’s Commission of Public Records

unanimously approved the Converso Legacy Archives as an official body of archival collections at the State Records Center and Archives in Santa Fe. According to Dr. Liz Horodowich, “This is a remarkable and visionary achievement. In the history department, we are so proud of Sean and his accomplishments in the field of public history.”

Sean already has 20 presentations to his name (including several at national conferences), two pre-thesis publications, and a dozen awards that range from the Department of History’s Recognition of Leadership award to a New Mexico Jewish Historical Society Research Award.

He says that “To carve out a path in the humanities is personally meaningful to me. It’s hard to be a lone-wolf historian and archivist without institutional support, and I’ve been grateful to have found that support.”

To relax, Sean enjoys cooking, hiking, and literature. Currently pursuing a graduate certificate in Judaica and Hebraica Librarianship from the Jewish Theological Seminary and Association of Jewish Libraries, after graduation he will begin its associated internship. After that, he hopes to find work as an archivist, continuing the work of building community archives. ▲