

CLASS OF 2026
Outstanding Graduate



JANESSA CLARK

College of Health, Education and
Social Transformation

Janessa Clark is graduating with a Bachelor of Public Health. From Alamogordo, NM, she lived in many places before coming home for her college education, and our statewide reach plus the strength of the College of HEST programs brought her to NMSU.

“Self-belief is priceless. My degree reflects perseverance, purpose, and a commitment to building healthier communities.”

She liked the flexibility of the public health program, and she already had experience in healthcare as a former U.S. Army Combat Medic and caretaker for her grandfather. Janessa notes, “What started as a practical decision ultimately became something I feel deeply connected to. I am especially interested in how research, data, and community programs work together to prevent disease and improve health outcomes.”

An NMSU Peer Mentor and Families and Youth Innovation Plus Field Intern, Janessa also served as an AI Data Trainer through the Handshake AI Fellowship, evaluating complex LLM outputs in neuroscience and microeconomics.

According to Dr. Jagdish Khubchandani, what sets Janessa apart is how “she bridges the gap between high-level public health theory and compassionate, boots-on-the-ground practice,” demonstrating “a remarkable trajectory of growth and dedication.”

Yet Janessa notes, “There was a time I believed college was not in the cards for me. Now, this award is recognition how, through resilience, perseverance, and discipline, I built a strong body of work through my courses, research, and field experience, addressing real public health challenges in our community.”

A Formula One enthusiast, she enjoys learning about the engineering and technology behind high-performance vehicles, and she and her husband share an interest in nutrition, physical fitness, and a healthy lifestyle.

Janessa will continue in the NMSU Master of Public Health program and eventually pursue a doctorate in interdisciplinary biomedical sciences: “My goal is to contribute to research and innovation that helps develop better diagnostic tools, medical technologies, and prevention strategies that improve health outcomes on a larger scale.” ▲