

CLASS OF 2026  
*Outstanding Graduate*



**ELLE MARIE NAÑEZ**

College of Business

Las Cruces native Elle Nañez is graduating with a Bachelor of Business Administration with a concentration in Small Business Management and Entrepreneurship and a minor in Human-Animal Interaction in the College of ACES.

According to Dr. Carol Flinchbaugh, “Elle exemplifies academic excellence, visionary leadership, entrepreneurial achievement, and extraordinary service in ways that truly distinguish Elle among their peers.”

**“NMSU gave me the foundational tools, confidence, and mindset to lead, learn, and create meaningful impact on my community.”**

When Elle was young, their mother had a service dog, and over time, Elle realized they might also need a service dog someday. They began to learn training methods and quickly realized this was what they loved to do and wanted to incorporate into a career.

Now, Elle’s company, Shelter to Service, provides service dogs at a lower cost by training shelter dogs to become service animals. The idea originated in high school and has developed ever since. Elle earned Arrowhead Center’s CEO and Student Explorer certificates through Studio G, and, in 2025, won the Fintech Bold Idea Challenge for their Shelter to Service business proposal. Elle also received the spring 2026 Outstanding General Business Student Award.

A College of Business Ambassador, Elle also served as secretary for the Business Council. As a first-semester freshman, they “jumped in headfirst” with the student American Marketing Association and went on to hold several leadership roles. In their spare time, Elle has enjoyed being part of a K-pop cover dance group called Milkee Way.

Upon graduation, Elle will continue to grow Shelter to Service, eventually relocating to California to work for Canine Companions, for which they are currently a volunteer puppy raiser. As Dr. Flinchbaugh notes, “This commitment is not casual — it is life-changing work.”

Elle’s overarching goal is “to advocate for those with a wide range of disabilities, including dynamic disabilities for which symptoms and physical abilities can fluctuate in the course of a day. I believe that this is truly worth something.” ▲