

CLASS OF 2026  
*Outstanding Graduate*



**JONATHON A. VALENCIA**

College of Agricultural, Consumer  
and Environmental Sciences

Jonathon Valencia is graduating with a Bachelor of Science in Animal Science with minors in Equine Management and Chemistry.

The Rio Rancho native looked elsewhere before choosing NMSU, but now says, “I couldn’t have made a better choice. The education and community have been amazing!”

**“My education and experience at NMSU have made me eager to invest in others the way so many have invested in me.”**

Although he did not grow up around animals, Jonathon’s interest in animal science was sparked when he was in middle school and found a YouTube channel with footage of veterinary surgery — and decided to become a veterinarian. Now, having been accepted into three veterinary schools, this fall he’ll attend the Washington State University College of Veterinary Medicine.

Jonathon gained extensive research experience at NMSU, studying animal reproductive physiology and using ewes to investigate how infections affect female fertility. He has conducted this research through several NMSU programs as well as the USDA’s Pipeline for Agricultural Leaders and the National Institutes of Health Undergraduate Research Training Initiative for Student Enhancement. Jonathon also took first place for a poster presentation at the 2025 American Society of Animal Science Western Section meeting, which Dr. Jennifer Hernandez Gifford notes is “a major accomplishment that reflects both scientific merit and communication skill.”

In his spare time, Jonathon enjoys time in the gym, camping, and sitting around a fire enjoying a good cigar. He has volunteered for the NMSU Therapeutic Riding Program and also represented NMSU on the Animal and Range Sciences Academic Quadrathlon Team at Colorado State University in 2025.

Jonathon says awards, including Outstanding Graduate, are “nice to get,” but adds, “What really brings me joy is to see how happy and proud they make my momma. She raised me and my two brothers on her own and made a lot of sacrifices, and I am proudest when I make her proud.”

After veterinary school, he and his fiancée, whom he met at NMSU, plan to return to New Mexico to be close to family. ▲