
SOWING SEEDS OF LEADERSHIP:



New Mexico Agricultural Leadership Program Updates



Class 17 Orientation- March 2025



Our mission is to develop knowledgeable, multicultural leaders for New Mexico's agricultural, food, and natural resource industries.

“Networking” – The Practice of Finding Other People Interesting By Anthony Colin

Networking. Few words evoke the peculiar blend of dread and anxiety that this term inspires in me and in others who are as socially awkward as I am. However, like a child tricked into eating vegetables, all it usually takes to overcome this discomfort is to start engaging with it. But what does it mean to “do” networking? Is it the self-serving, opportunistic maneuvering depicted in political dramas? Is it a game of memorizing and recalling as many details about everyone you meet as possible? Or is it the learned skill of exploring interests with complete strangers? Which aspects of their lives are captivating and worth discussing for both parties? I would argue that while it can sometimes involve a mix of all three, at its best, networking is primarily the latter: finding other people interesting.

Finding others interesting begins with the belief that everyone is captivating. In his seminal work, *“How to Win Friends and Influence People,”* Dale Carnegie is often interpreted as encouraging readers to feign interest in others for manipulation. He suggests that many readers strain their eyes to smooth over others’ rough edges and suppress imperfections, making everyone appear like a mound of wet clay, malleable to their vision. Without addressing the validity of that criticism, the simple fact remains that Carnegie’s most relevant principle states, **“Become genuinely interested in other people”** (emphasis added). Not everyone is likable; some truly are unpleasant. However, without exception, everyone possesses at least one interesting trait that deserves genuine curiosity for discussion. Even if conversing with people you dislike becomes a game of deciphering their behavior, I argue that this outcome is still preferable.



What is Leadership? By Yesenia Palma

According to Abraham Zaleznik (1991), organizations often use “leader” and “manager” interchangeably, even though these terms represent fundamentally different mental approaches. In Chapter 4 of *Leading and Managing*, Zaleznik challenges traditional views on leadership by arguing that true leaders act more like artists than administrators, rejecting the notion that leadership is merely an extension of management.

Managers vs. Leaders: The Core Differences

Managers ensure organizational stability by applying structured processes that maintain order while optimizing efficiency. According to Zaleznik (1991), these individuals focus on clear objectives, use fixed regulations as their decision-making framework, and play essential roles in ensuring that organizations operate smoothly. As Peter Drucker famously stated, “Management is doing things right; leadership is doing the right things.”

Leaders achieve optimal performance when handling unpredictable situations. They transform chaotic situations into growth opportunities, which enables them to inspire organizational change through their vision, charisma, and emotional connections. Rather than simply directing people, leaders motivate and empower them, often taking risks to push beyond the status quo. Winston Churchill once said, “Success consists of going from failure to failure without a loss of enthusiasm,” emphasizing that leaders persist through uncertainty and setbacks to drive progress.

Leadership in Action

The role of Chief of Staff at the College of ACES has taught me about the relationship between leadership and management, including their connections and differences. The daily operations of a complex academic institution require proper management through structured

efficiency and deliberate planning. Yet, our college’s true progress has come from moments of bold leadership: Faculty members pursue innovative research opportunities despite uncertain results, administrators endorse new initiatives, and students face challenges that push their personal boundaries.

True leadership involves developing a transcendent vision and bringing people together to work towards realizing it. Leadership effectiveness requires moving beyond procedures to establish personal connections during higher education change initiatives or pandemic responses while building partnerships that focus on the organization’s mission.

Key Contrasts Between Leadership and Management:

- Chaos vs. Order: Leaders see disorder as an opportunity for innovation but managers concentrate on eliminating disorder (Zaleznik, 1991).

- Short-term vs. Long-term Thinking: Managers focus on immediate goals, while leaders create a lasting vision.

- Structure vs. Emotion: Leadership develops from building strong personal connections while managers prioritize formal organizational systems.

- Rules vs. Intuition: Leaders make bold decisions based on instinct while managers follow established processes

Leadership goes beyond everyday administrative tasks because, as Zaleznik (1991) explains, it involves creating visions and having the courage to enact inspirational changes. As I reflect on my role, I recognize the need to balance both mindsets: maintaining structure while fostering a culture of innovation and progress.

Are you leading or managing? The answer could shape the future of our college and our impact on the communities we serve.

Looking Ahead - Class 17 By Marissa Diles

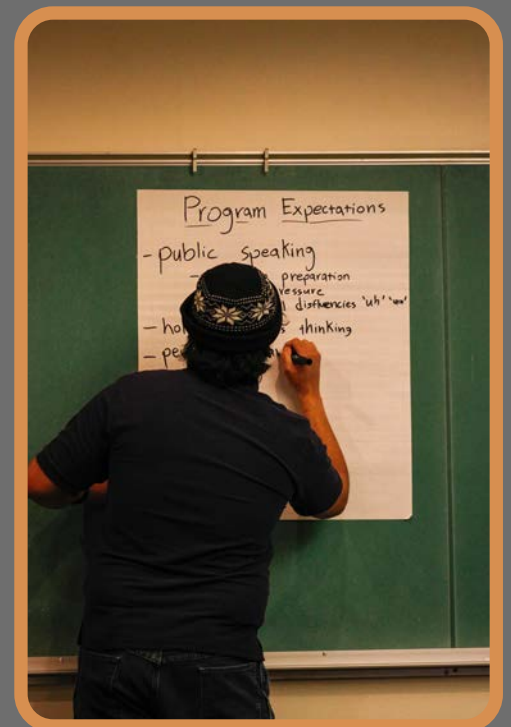
Class 17 began its eighteen-month journey in the New Mexico Ag Leadership Program with an orientation seminar in Las Cruces from January 15 to 17, 2025. We spent three days getting to know one another and outlining our time together. We discussed the areas and skills we aimed to learn and improve during our experience.

NMAL focuses on three pillars: industry awareness, networking, and leadership. Throughout our time, we will travel across the state for eight seminars, exploring various sectors within New Mexico's agriculture industry. Additionally, we will visit Washington, D. C., and Argentina. These sessions will provide opportunities to apply NMAL's three main pillars. During orientation, we discussed potential producers, businesses, and agencies we would like to meet with during our travels across the state. Class 17 expressed strong interest in engaging with individuals in the state's renewable energy sectors, learning about water rights, enhancing public speaking skills, and meeting with various state agencies.

We are going to Argentina! During orientation, it was revealed that our summer trip abroad will take us to Buenos Aires and the surrounding areas. While there, we will explore Argentina's vast agricultural industry, focusing on beef, wine, and pecan production.

Class 17 will conduct conference calls bi-monthly. Each call will be led by a different classmate, giving us the opportunity to enhance our leadership and speaking skills. Our first selection is *Modern Manners* by Dorthea Johnson and Liv Tyler. Future readings include, *Turn the Ship Around*, *The Leadership Challenge*, and a personal leadership book.

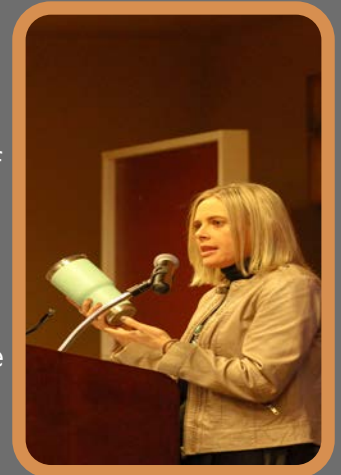
We concluded our first seminar at Class 16's graduation. Each graduate shared their experiences and take-aways from the program. Hearing their stories gave us a glimpse into what we might encounter and learn throughout the program. Each participant shared a unique perspective on their time in the program, and I am eager to see what each of us in Class 17 will take away from this experience.



Class 16 Graduation By Michael Purdy

The graduation ceremony for the New Mexico Agricultural Leadership Program Class 16 took place on January 17 at the NMSU Golf Course Clubhouse in Las Cruces. The venue was filled with friends and family celebrating the achievements of Class 16. We were joined by the New Mexico Agriculture Leadership Board of Directors, industry professionals, program supporters, and members of the incoming Class 17. It was inspiring to see such a large gathering honoring Class 16 and to hear the insightful remarks from the speakers.

The keynote speaker at the graduation was Missi Currier, the president and CEO of the New Mexico Oil and Gas Association. Missi delivered a passionate speech to the crowd, emphasizing the importance of building and maintaining professional relationships while highlighting that everyone possesses unique qualities that can help them become leaders in their respective fields. She was followed by another equally passionate speaker, Mr. Bob Mayberry, who offered valuable insights and advice to the graduates and the incoming class, along with a heartfelt message about the significance of kindness that resonated with the entire audience.



Every graduating member of Class 16 had the opportunity to speak, reflecting on the past 18 months and their shared experiences. A common theme among the graduating class was their gratitude for these memories. Class 16 recalled numerous trips where they connected with industry professionals from across the state and gained insights into what it means to be a leader. The members of Class 16 spoke confidently about the various qualities they recognized in leaders, and it was clear to the audience that they embodied many of those same traits.

The advice given to the incoming class 17 focused on maximizing opportunities within the New Mexico Agricultural Leadership Program. Participants are encouraged to maintain an open mind and be willing to explore new ideas, as this is essential for personal growth and building professional connections. It was also evident that new class members are expected to embrace new foods and experiences. A heartfelt thank you to Tina Wilson, the board of directors, and all supporters of the New Mexico Agriculture Leadership Program for fostering the professional development and leadership skills of both past and present class members.



Class 16 Graduates (Left to Right) Emily Harris, Katelin Lee, and Julie Hughes

MEET CLASS 17

By Aaron Romero and Cherylin Atcitty

Aaron Romero



Growing up in his grandfather's alfalfa fields, Aaron Romero developed a profound appreciation for agriculture from an early age. By merging his passion for the land with his financial expertise, he has become a respected figure in agricultural credit across New Mexico. At American Ag Credit, he assists farmers and ranchers in maintaining an agricultural way of life. At first glance, Aaron may seem focused strictly on business, but once you get to know him, you realize he's the kind of friend you've always wanted—a kind-hearted cowboy and team roper. Outside of work, Aaron enjoys spending time with his family and promoting a healthy, active lifestyle for his sons. His passion for agriculture extends beyond the workplace, as he hopes his experiences in the New Mexico Agricultural Leadership (NMAL) program will motivate the next generation—especially youth involved in 4-H and FFA—to pursue their dreams in agriculture.

Yesenia Palma



As the Chief of Staff for the College of Agricultural, Consumer, and Environmental Sciences at New Mexico State University, Yesenia Palma expertly balances the many aspects of a thriving institution. She ensures that everything runs smoothly while keeping an eye on the future of agricultural education. Throughout her life, Yesenia has drawn inspiration from numerous individuals, yet her father stands out as her greatest teacher in leadership. He provided not only the necessities of life but also instilled in her the importance of joy—often surprising her with thoughtful gifts that reminded her to appreciate the little things. Despite her many responsibilities, Yesenia never loses sight of what matters most: her family. No matter how busy life gets, she always makes time for her daughters, recognizing that success isn't solely measured by achievements but by the love and moments shared with those closest to her. She strives to lead by example, demonstrating to her daughters that hard work and knowledge go hand in hand with kindness, balance, and unwavering dedication.

Marissa Diles

When you first meet Marissa Diles, it's clear that embracing the fast-paced modern world doesn't require sacrificing your Western heritage. With a firm handshake and a sharp mind, she embodies both grit and grace—qualities that are perfectly aligned with her upbringing on a cattle ranch in South Texas.

Marissa draws inspiration from her grandmother, whose resourcefulness and determination built a gymnastics business from the ground up. That same drive fuels Marissa's work at Ag Trust Farm Credit, where she helps others turn their dreams into reality.

A true outdoor enthusiast, Marissa seamlessly blends her passion for nature with the demands of today's fast-paced world. Whether at work or during her leisure time, she remains grounded in her roots while embracing the future of agriculture.



Michael Purdy

Michael Purdy is a Soil and Water Conservation District Specialist in the Agricultural Programs and Resources Division of the New Mexico Department of Agriculture. He works remotely from his home in Chamita, NM. Michael credits both his father and grandfather for his diverse agricultural experience, noting that he was inspired at a young age by their strong work ethics. He takes pride in his upbringing in Northern New Mexico and enjoys bow hunting and caring for his livestock in his free time. Additionally, Michael enjoys consulting with local farmers on improving irrigation systems and water flow, gaining expertise in that area over time. When asked for a good place to eat near his hometown, Michael readily recommends Socorro's Restaurant in Hernandez.



Cherylin Atcitty



Cherylin Atcitty is the Director of Indian Resources Development at the College of Agricultural, Consumer, and Environmental Sciences (ACES) at New Mexico State University. Cherylin and her husband live in Taos, NM, where they spend much of their free time caring for their livestock, joined by their beloved dog. Cherylin is passionate about producing alfalfa and hopes to see her operation flourish. With a unique upbringing and as a proud member of the Navajo Nation, she is deeply inspired by both her grandmothers, who were widowed at a young age. She respects their wealth of knowledge in livestock care and their exceptional horsemanship skills, even as they aged. Eager to give back, Cherylin aims to inspire the younger generation and lead by example, showing how far one can go through hard work and perseverance.

Anthony Colin



Anthony Colin is a Natural Resource Policy and Planning Analyst for the New Mexico Department of Agriculture. He grew up in California but now lives in Las Cruces, NM. Anthony credits his father with helping him understand the importance of persistence in finding solutions. He hopes to inspire anyone in need. Anthony enjoys playing Nintendo Switch games with his girlfriend in his free time. Additionally, he loves gardening and savoring great food and recommends Chachi's Restaurant in the Las Cruces area.

A Word from College Drive By Tina Wilson

It's hard to believe that Class 17 started in January. This will be the fourth group of young professionals I will guide through the program. After spending a few days with them, I'm excited to see where the next 18 months will lead us. It was tough to say goodbye to Class 16, but as the saying goes, "All good things must come to an end." We had an excellent celebration and a fabulous keynote speaker, Missi Currier, president and CEO of the New Mexico Oil and Gas Association.

During orientation, I accidentally revealed the location of our international trip: we will be traveling to Argentina this July. I have never been to South America; needless to say, I am beyond excited. That's another continent to check off my bucket list. One downside is that I won't have the opportunity to drop hints about our destination and drive the class crazy. I plan to entertain them with fun facts, such as Argentina's official national sport, El Pato. You might be asking yourself, "What is El Pato?" This sport combines polo, basketball, and horseback riding, where players on horseback try to land a rubber ball in a floating basket or goal. I must see this in person! More details will follow in the coming months.



Upcoming Seminars
Southeastern New Mexico: April 23-24
Argentina: July 2025

THANK YOU

Thank you to our sponsors. We appreciate your continued support of New Mexico Agricultural Leadership Program.

Friends of NMAL

Bob and Sandra Mayberry,
Mayberry Inc.
Caren Cowan
Livestock Market Digest
New Mexico Stockman
KC Schooley
Cattlegrowers Foundation

Crimson Colleagues

Jeff and Janet Witte



New Mexico Agricultural Leadership Program

MSC 3501 Box 3003 Las Cruces, NM 88003-8003

Phone: 575-646-6691 Fax: 575-646-4082

Email: nmal@nmsu.edu Website: aces.nmsu.edu/nmal

Follow us @NMagLeadership



BE BOLD. Shape the Future.
**College of Agricultural, Consumer
and Environmental Sciences**