

CLASS OF 2024

Outstanding Graduate



ARYANNA LLAÑEZ

College of Engineering

Crimson Scholar Aryanna Llañez is graduating with a Bachelor of Science in both aerospace engineering and mechanical engineering. A self-described “stickler” about her GPA, which is 3.99, she has been on the Dean’s Honor List since 2020 and was NMSU’s 2024 Outstanding Engineering Student.

“At NMSU, I realized I have the ability to lead meaningful advancements in aerospace — and turn the impossible into reality.”

Aryanna’s favorite NMSU moment occurred when her senior-year mentor received a job offer from SpaceX, outcompeting applicants from high-profile universities. His advice to her then was that prestige didn’t matter — what did matter was your engagement with opportunities. She took that advice to heart with both her academics and Atomic Aggies, the hands-on research and execution experience for students interested in rocketry.

“The rocket team was my life. I’m proud of what I did — making connections and gaining the confidence to run the team as lead engineer and president. I developed a backbone.” One of her proudest accomplishments at NMSU, Aryanna spearheaded the design, research, and development of a high-power competition rocket that reached an altitude of 10,273 feet. Her leadership contributed to the team’s impressive performance at the Spaceport America Cup, taking 1st place for New Mexico in 2023 and 9th place in the 2022 Commercial Off-the-Shelf international competition.

As a senior, she provided advice and mentorship to other students, especially Atomic Aggies. “Engineering was a hard degree, and really provided a sense of community. The smaller classes felt personal, and the professors were always supportive. I want to give back to NMSU and make a difference for others. New Mexico has become the gateway to space, and I want to help NMSU be part of that.”

Here on earth, Aryanna loves to travel, especially if it involves outdoor activities or relaxing in a small-town coffee shop — and after graduation, she will take a few well-deserved weeks off to travel before starting work for Lockheed Martin’s space division at White Sands Missile Range. ▲