

## **Student Life Staff Members Graduate from Employee Leadership Program**

***Fred Martino, Ph.D., Assistant Director of Student Activities***

New Mexico State University is helping to develop future campus leaders through the [Aggie Leadership Training Academy](#), a 10-month certification program designed to prepare high-performing employees for expanded roles across the university. And Student Life leaders have been taking advantage of the opportunity. Josh Taylor, Associate Dean of Student Conduct, Karo Ademilla, the Leadership, Engagement, & Traditions Coordinator, and Jude Betancourt, Health Education Specialist, recently graduated from the Academy.

The program — known as ALTA — is open to administrators, faculty and staff who demonstrate strong potential for leadership, regardless of job title. It is part of a broader succession-planning effort supported by the NMSU Board of Regents.

“The most valuable aspect of ALTA for me personally was the ability to network with a wide variety of NMSU professionals,” said Josh Taylor. “I had only known a couple of folks at the start of ALTA, but the ‘ALTA Effect’ became clear as I worked with several individuals who were in my ALTA class throughout the year, and it was nice to have ALTA as an ice breaker.”

Managed by the university’s Center for Learning & Professional Development, ALTA blends expert-led presentations, engagement with campus executives, curated readings and cohort-based reflection to build a wide range of leadership competencies. Participants meet one Friday each month and complete assignments throughout the program.

“ALTA was an outstanding experience that allowed me to connect with colleagues from many different departments across the NMSU campus,” said Jude Betancourt. “The diversity of our cohort created a rich environment for shared learning, collaboration, and professional growth. The program equipped us with practical strategies and tools that enhance both our work and our personal lives. ALTA was engaging, dynamic, and genuinely enjoyable. I am grateful to have been part of it.”

Karo Ademilla also said she benefited greatly. “The ALTA program was an unforgettable experience, and I have many takeaways, as I learned something new from every session,” said Ademilla. “The most valuable thing for me was the opportunity to be in the room with colleagues, sharing experiences, and learning from them. This practical application reflects how the program has shaped me as a person today. ALTA was more than just a program; it was a transformation for leaders, empowering them to powerfully soar in what they do best, and to build, innovate, and explore best practices while serving the New Mexico State University students.”

Josh Taylor said he is already using what he learned in the program, “Communication and feedback – From encoding and decoding to fighting through the noise to find the true message were the most impactful to me. The importance of organizational communication cannot be underscored enough for a successful organization,” said Taylor.

ALTA focuses on 13 core competencies aligned with the NMSU LEADS values. These include communication, emotional and cultural intelligence, coaching, mentoring, delegation, conflict resolution and strategies for navigating organizational change. Participants also learn tools for creating inclusive work and learning environments.

“The application of ALTA is reflective in my role as working with campus leader/ stakeholders to develop the leadership program for our campus,” said Karo Ademilla. “The cohort experience has helped me develop leadership session content with strategic alignment, and events focus on creating amazing experiences tied to our traditions.”

ALTA program outcomes emphasize improving communication, building collaborative workplaces, strengthening confidence, and developing positive approaches to conflict.

To be considered, applicants must be recommended by a current supervisor and ideally have at least one year of regular university employment. Program organizers aim to build diverse cohorts representing departments across campus.

“ALTA has opened many doors for cross-campus collaboration, and I will continue to build on these relationships to find innovative programs that engage, build, and impact our students, which is highly beneficial for student retention and graduation rates at NMSU,” said Karo Ademilla.

Selected participants are expected to attend at least eight of the 10 sessions, actively engage with their cohort, and complete assigned readings and assessments. Graduates earn a certificate recognizing their completion of the program.