

New specialist at NMSU's Chile Pepper Institute hails from migrant worker family

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Adan Delval is the newest program specialist at New Mexico State University's Chile Pepper Institute. He holds a bachelor's and a master's degree from NMSU and, as an undergraduate student, took part in an agricultural research project sponsored by the National Science Foundation. He's also from a migrant farm worker family.

A photo of NMSU program specialist Adan Delval.

Adan Delval is the newest program specialist at New Mexico State University's Chile Pepper Institute. He's also from a migrant farm worker family. (NMSU photo by Justin Bannister)

"I saw my parents struggle working in the fields," he said. "I decided it wasn't what I wanted to do with my life so I worked to pursue an education."

Born in Chihuahua, Delval's family eventually moved to Columbus, New Mexico. There, he became familiar with NMSU, making several class trips to the university while in high school. After graduation, Delval followed some friends to NMSU to study government and Spanish.

In 2008, he applied for and was accepted into the Chile Pepper Institute's Agricultural Science Summer Undergraduate Research and Education Development, or ASSURED, program. It was designed to help students from migrant families learn how to conduct research and guide them toward careers in agricultural science. The program ran from 2003-2011 and paired college freshmen and sophomores from migrant farm families with NMSU faculty mentors for nine weeks each summer to design and complete a research project and report their findings in a research paper, poster and public seminar.

"I'm proud that of the 90 students that went through the summer program, 99 percent of them graduated from college," said Paul Bosland, director of the Chile Pepper Institute and principal investigator for the ASSURED program.

Delval credits the program with exposing him to science and research experimentation. He spent a summer as an intern with Ryan Goss, an NMSU associate professor in the Department of Plant and

Environmental Sciences, studying grasses and which kinds of fertilizer help them grow best in the Southwest.

In his 2008 end-of-program essay Delval wrote, “I knew there were career opportunities out there, but ASSURED helped me to discover how a college education helps a person attain them.”

Delval earned his bachelor’s in 2012 and later earned his master’s in public administration in 2014. Now, back at NMSU, he will work with the Chile Pepper Institute’s retail operation and assist with the calls that come in from around the world seeking information on chile peppers.

“I’m looking forward to learning, and relearning, more about chile peppers,” he said. “I was born in Mexico, so with my family, we always eat everything with chile. There’s a passion for chile there. I’m also looking forward to speaking with people and answering their questions.”

The Chile Pepper Institute is housed in NMSU’s Gerald Thomas Hall, Room 265. You can visit them online at chilepepperinstitute.org.