

Organic vegetable variety trials, nutrition education, and community outreach

Brad Tonnessen (Lead mentor)

Research Scientist, Organic Agriculture Research Station at Rogers Mesa

Ann Duncan (Mentor)

CSU Extension, Tri River Area, Southwest Region

Amanda McQuade (Mentor)

Community Alliance for Education and Hunger Relief, WCRC-Orchard Mesa

Keegan Athey (Mentor)

Research Associate – Horticulturist, Organic Agriculture Research Station at Rogers Mesa

This summer internship will be located at the Organic Agriculture Research Station at Rogers Mesa (OARS-RM) in Hotchkiss, Colorado. At OARS-RM, we are performing replicated vegetable variety trials using seed sourced from local companies and crop types recommended by local growers. Typically, variety trials are limited in scope by using the most popular cultivars nationwide, often ignoring varieties produced by small, regional seed companies. The student will learn skills in field experimental design as well as many facets of organic vegetable farming including irrigation management, maintaining soil health, crop rotation, harvest and planting timing, and seed production. Additionally, farmers and seed producers need information from the public on varieties in terms of taste, aesthetics, texture, cooking, and desire to purchase. We are partnered with The Learning Council of Paonia and CSU's Community Alliance for Education and Hunger Relief Program, both education, nutrition, and food advocacy programs. The intern will be working with these groups to distribute our produce to food insecure populations, while also requesting surveys from them about variety preference. This internship also involves planning and participating in community events such as field days at the research station and tasting panels at local farmers markets. They will also be attending educational workshops provided by extension and research personnel. The student will visit participant farmers and seed producers, gaining experience in different agricultural business endeavors. Overall, this internship will provide professional development for a career in agricultural research, extension education, and pursuits in agricultural business.

During this internship, the student will be provided free housing at OARS-RM at the station's 3-bedroom residence with all utilities provided. The student should expect early and late afternoon work hours in the field to avoid the mid-day summer heat (30 hrs/week). They should also expect to occasionally travel between OARS-RM and the Western Colorado Research Center - Orchard Mesa (WCRC-OM, Grand Junction, CO), where complementary trials are being conducted. Vehicle mileage will be reimbursed.