

17. Long-Term Viability and Health Assessment for small-scale, direct-market producers in SW Colorado

Mentors: [Darrin Parmenter](#), [Becca Jablonski](#)

Location: La Plata and Montezuma counties

1. Extension mentor and application contact information

Darrin Parmenter

La Plata County Extension

Darrin.parmenter@colostate.edu

Becca Jablonski

Department of Agricultural and Resource Economics

Becca.Jablonski@colostate.edu

2. In what region(s) will the student be working (county/region/state)?

Depending on scope, and length of interviews, we would propose that the intern would be working in (primarily) La Plata and Montezuma counties, but could also work in Archuleta and Dolores counties. All these counties are in SW Colorado and within the Western Region.

3. In less than 150 words, please describe the proposed internship goals, scope, and objectives.

We are proposing a detailed survey and interviews for direct-market fruit, vegetable, and livestock producers in southwest Colorado. The purpose of the surveys/interviews would be to get detailed information on the producers financial security (land acquisition/use models, business management techniques, infrastructure needs and challenges, equity, asset building, etc.) as well as their market stability (market share, estate management, etc.). If the mentors see additional opportunities, we would also potentially look at addressing a general feeling of discord amongst producers and advocates alike that “greenwashing” is occurring here regarding the actual purchasing of local products. The end goal of the process would be to create a needs assessment that could give local organizations direction as to how we can address, and educate the community, on where we need to go to remain a viable agricultural community. This needs assessment could also be used as a marketing tool by local producers, as they can tell their markets “this is what you are supporting”.

4. Which PRU activities are included in the scope of this internship?

Value of this assessment would be felt in the Food Systems, Cropping Systems, and Community Development PRUs.

5. What student learning outcomes do you anticipate and are there opportunities for professional development?

The student will learn: 1) Primary source research; 2) interview skills and a better understanding of diverse agricultural producers and systems; and 3) developing of a needs assessment.

6. How does this internship support identified stakeholder needs in your county/region?

Multiple organizations, such as CSU Extension, the Old Fort, Good Food Collective, South West Farm

Fresh Cooperative, regional food distribution centers and others would see the value in this detailed agricultural business assessment, especially if we were to tie it in to subsequent asset mapping opportunities here in southwest Colorado.

7. **What is your experience with mentorship? In less than 100 words, please describe your experience with and approach to mentorship.**

I have been fortunate to work with the agriculture and food systems PRUs with CSU Extension over the past 12 years and was born and raised here in La Plata County, so I have a good grasp on the needs of the community. I am willing to connect the intern with other organizations who would be working towards the same goal. We have a working space available here in the Extension office and would be in close contact with the intern throughout the stay.

8. **Are there on-going connections with CSU faculty associated with this project, or is there identified faculty interest?**

Most definitely. The Food Systems PRU team would be very interested in this project and Becca Jablonski has already indicated her interest.

9. **Are travel funds available? Opportunities to provide student assistance with housing?**

Limited travel funds may be available – there is also potential of accessing USDA funding through an existing grant. We would be able to research housing, but it is hard to find.