2025 Annual Report

CSU Extension Internship Program

COLORADO STATE UNIVERSITY EXTENSION

"This year's internships were nothing short of inspiring. Across the state, students created meaningful change and made real impacts through their research and projects. Their work didn't just make a difference; it left a lasting mark."

- Kyla Davis, Extension Internship Program Manager.

A record 644 applications were received for the 2025 Extension Internship program! Pictured are some of the 2025 interns.

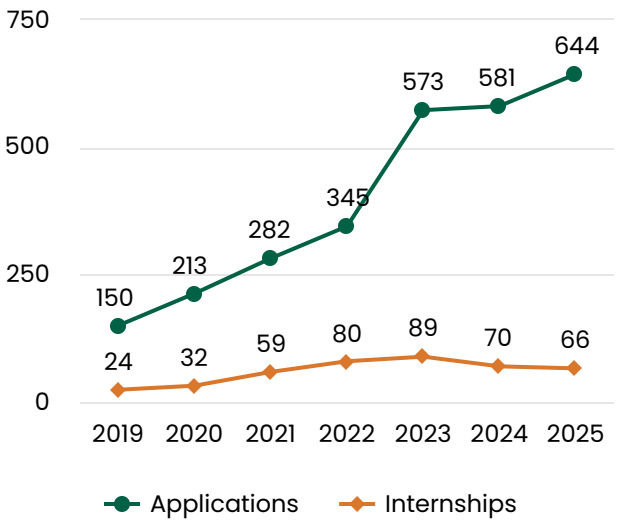
HOW INTERNS ARE SUPPORTING COLORADO COMMUNITIES

Our internship program pairs Extension experts from around the state with on-campus University faculty who work together to give CSU students meaningful, hands-on learning experiences where they contribute to applied research efforts all across Colorado.

Every year, dozens of paid internships are available to any student at CSU, regardless of their academic program. Internships often involve significant time spent in the field, ranging from literal agricultural research fields to economic centers in small mountain towns and county fairs where students engage with eager young learners.

Student interns develop research skills with the support of their mentors while also exploring new interests, improving their professional communications, strengthening community connections and preparing for their careers after graduation.

PROGRAM GROWTH: EXPERIENCE IS IN DEMAND



EXTENSION INTERN HIGHLIGHTS

98% of intern respondents reported that they would recommend this internship to a friend. 95% of mentor respondents reported that they feel more connected to campus and to other personnel in the field.

The CSU Extension internship program provides undergraduate and graduate students with one-of-a-kind learning experiences that often have transformative educational and career outcomes. This approach aligns CSU's dedication to student success with our commitment to Colorado communities. Here are some select projects from our interns this summer.

AGRICULTURAL SCIENCES

Ainsley Maynard, B.S. Soil and Crop Sciences, "Pollinators on Green Roofs"
Ainsley researched how different seeding densities for "sewn meadows" on rooftop gardens can boost biodiversity, support pollinators, and keep weeds in check to inform industry best practices. The hands-on research experience across rooftops at CSU Spur Hydro, the Community College of Denver, and Denver Botanic Gardens encouraged Ainsley to pursue a career in green roof design, where she sees opportunities to help cities achieve real-world benefits like cooling urban heat islands and boosting community well-being. **Watch Ainsley in action! (col.st/eis6f)**

Ainsley Maynard (left) with her mentor on the green roof of the Hydro building at CSU Spur.

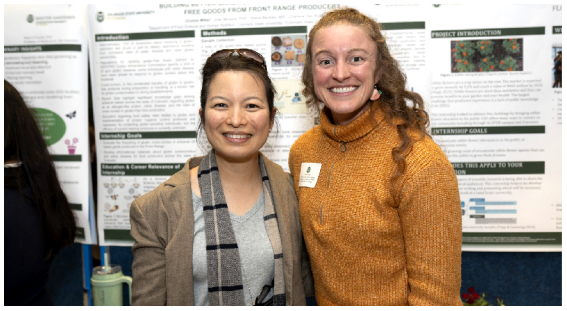
WALTER SCOTT, JR. COLLEGE OF ENGINEERING

Ava Becker-Church, Master's in Civil & Environmental Engineering, "Beaver Mimicry & Sediment Transport Along the Colorado River"
Ava's internship in Rocky Mountain National Park focused on restoring the historical wetlands in the Kawuneeche Valley. She monitored the effectiveness of man-made beaver dams along Beaver Creek that were designed to slow and pool water as well as trap sediment, just as real beaver dams did in the past. The early results are encouraging, and they're helping guide next steps for restoration efforts on nearby Onahu and Baker Creeks, with more installations planned for 2026. **Ava was featured in a CSU SOURCE article! (col.st/8qb10)**

Ava Becker-Church (center) monitors tributaries of the Upper Colorado River for a restoration project.

HEALTH & HUMAN SCIENCES

Chelsie Miller, Ph.D. in Food Science and Human Nutrition, "Gluten-free Bakeries in the Front Range"
Chelsie evaluated the risk of gluten cross-contact in artisanal gluten-free baked goods along Colorado's Front Range and created outreach materials for food producers to increase food safety. Chelsie says, "The experience of working with principal investigators in community-involved research is rare and special. This internship helped me bridge the gap between what I do in my lab and how food science research can be applied in the field."



Chelsie Miller (right) at the CSU Extension internship poster session.

LIBERAL ARTS

Tewabe Negash Kassaw, Ph.D. in Anthropology, "Climate-adaptive Dryland Farm Management"
Tewabe documented the social and ecological history of a 2,300-acre private farm in southwest Colorado and evaluated outcomes of its transition from row-cropping to regenerative grazing and native plant restoration. Tewabe gained practical field and lab skills, a deeper grasp of dryland restoration methods, and an appreciation for adaptive management centered on soil health and long-term stewardship.

Tewabe Negash Kassaw collects ecological data in the Boulder, Colorado area.

NATURAL SCIENCES

Dylan Mitchel, B.S. Biological Science, "Bee Conservation and Outreach Using Bee Hotels"

Dylan worked with Extension to support native pollinators by studying "bee hotels" around Fort Collins. These small wooden boxes, drilled with holes to mimic natural cavities, provide nesting space for species like mason and leafcutter bees, important pollinators whose habitat is often lost in suburban landscapes. Dylan helped track which designs bees prefer, monitored occupancy, and even learned to identify species by their nesting signs and cocoons. **Watch Dylan in action! (col.st/ttlby)**

Dylan Mitchel poses with bee hotels he built on the green roof of the CSU Nutrien building.

VETERINARY MEDICINE & BIOLOGICAL SCIENCES

Leigh Hoitt, Master's of Public Health & DVM, Dani DeRousseau, DVM, "Avian Health and Biosecurity in Colorado"

Leigh and Dani supported statewide poultry health through on-farm surveillance and county fair inspections. At fairs, they assessed bird alertness, body condition, and signs of ectoparasites, while rigorously maintaining biosecurity for gear, clothing, and vehicles. Their internship experience strengthened Leigh and Dani's skills in field diagnostics, communication with livestock owners, and public-facing disease-prevention messaging. Their efforts underscored how surveillance programs can double as access points for community health education, which can help strengthen biosecurity efforts in rural areas that rely on backyard flocks. **Leigh and Dani were featured in a SOURCE story! (col.st/n9hgs)**

Dani DeRousseau (left) holds a chicken while Leigh Hoitt (right) collects blood to test for pullorum-typhoid.

SCHOOL OF PUBLIC HEALTH

Sasha Terry, Master's of Public Health, "Using Virtual Reality to Teach Dairy Calf Welfare and Hygiene to Rural K-12 Students"

Sasha used immersive VR training to teach K–12 learners hygiene and biosecurity in dairy calf care, letting students practice feeding pasteurized milk, applying biosecurity steps, and navigating worker/animal movement in realistic farm scenarios with avatars. Sasha's findings from the internship suggest the students responded well to the hands-on, repeatable VR practice and encouraged future analysis of the survey data to refine modules by age and prior knowledge. Sasha says, "My internship helped me find greater purpose in my field of study. It was a great way to connect with others and be a part of something that many others have contributed to."

Sasha Terry (right) helps a student navigate a VR program for dairy calf feeding.

WARNER COLLEGE OF NATURAL RESOURCES

Jackson Baldwin, B.S. Natural Resources Management, "Exploring Revegetation for Retired Croplands in the San Luis Valley"

With aquifer declines, compact obligations, and rising groundwater fees in in the San Luis Valley, large areas of irrigated cropland must retire in the future. In order to support ecological recovery and agricultural viability under these intensifying water constraints, Jackson worked with landowners and agencies to design and monitor revegetation test plots and create a producer-friendly revegetation assessment protocol that will curb wind erosion, guide native grass/seed-mix choices, and enable managed grazing on former fields. Jackson says, "I've really learned the importance of cooperation in conservation. This internship helped me develop necessary skills for my future career and a network that will support me as I consider a master's degree and future jobs."

Jackson Baldwin at the Extension internship poster session.

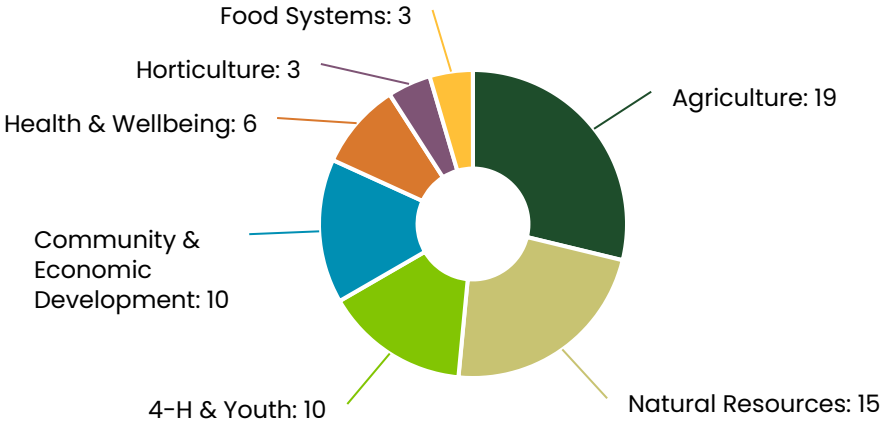
THE IMPACT OF HANDS-ON EXPERIENCE

90% of intern respondents reported that they now have a better understanding of how research can be applied in communities.

Extension internships focus on solving real-world problems impacting Colorado communities, ecosystems, ag producers, economies, and more. Crossing disciplines, our Extension interns, experts, and on-campus faculty have worked to enhance our understanding of stubborn challenges - and their solutions - spanning topics like:

- Crop resiliency to pest pressure and drought
- Animal disease prevention and biosecurity
- Growing food in urban environments
- Responding to agricultural water challenges in the San Luis Valley
- Human–wildlife coexistence on working lands
- Climate adaptation in farms and forests
- River and floodplain resilience
- Pollinator conservation
- Food safety, consumer protection and community nutrition
- Youth mental health and access to quality outdoor learning and careers
- Agricultural economic resilience & diversification
- Preserving rural and Indigenous heritage
- Language access and culturally responsive care/education
- Development of economic decision tools

INTERNSHIP TOPIC AREAS



"It was incredible to see the bond between interns and mentor teams. Students spoke of mentors who were supportive, motivating, and deeply invested in their success, several are continuing to collaborate even after the internship has ended. I had interns and mentors describe their internship experiences as transformative, professionally enriching, and personally fulfilling. It's truly inspiring to see such passion, purpose, and connection flourishing through this program!"
- Kyla Davis, Extension Internship Program Manager.

2025 INTERN HOME COLLEGE

21	17	12	5	3	3	3	2
Warner College of Natural Resources	Agricultural Sciences	Liberal Arts	School of Public Health	CVMBS	Natural Sciences	Health & Human Sciences	Engineering

"This internship has most certainly made me want to pursue further education and more hands on research in the future! I feel like this internship solidified my interest in fisheries research and stream ecology, and I now know what I want to fully pursue going forward."
- Fletcher Pernat, B.S. Fish, Wildlife, and Conservation Biology.

Fletcher's internship focused on fisheries restoration in a flow-regulated river on a private ranch Kremmling, Colorado. He learned core fisheries skills like electrofishing, seining ponds, stocking fish, and hatchery care. Fletcher enjoyed connecting with the volunteers helping out during adult fish sampling in the river and commented that working hand-in-hand with other ecologists and fisherman/conservationists made him feel like he was working with a like-minded community, which felt great!

THE IMPACT OF HANDS-ON EXPERIENCE

Helping students explore career opportunities, find purpose in their fields, and understand the realities of research and community outreach.

"My internship experience made me more interested in pursuing hands-on research opportunities in the future. I enjoyed working directly with participants, collecting data, and learning how research can have a real impact."
- Ana Mendoza, Master's in Languages, Literatures, and Cultures.

Ana's internship probed what counts as "effective communication" when clinicians speak Spanish with patients/clients, noting U.S. legal requirements for understandable care but no standard for effectiveness in Spanish. Methods included recruiting Latino participants across medical and veterinary interviews and analyzing barriers and enablers (vocabulary, fluency, interpretation, plain/clear language, empathy, visuals). Ana's biggest takeaway is that clear communication and patience are key when working with people, especially in a research setting.

"I think this experience was incredibly significant in developing my teaching strategies, and I really enjoyed finding and creating hands-on activities that would capture the kids' attention and instill in them a passion for the environment."
- Helena Michaels, B.S. Natural Resources Management.

Helena developed and delivered a five-week curriculum on wildfire, water, ecosystems, renewable energy, and geology for underserved youth in Jefferson County. Her experience showed her how much she enjoys teaching and opened her mind to pursuing more opportunities like field work or consulting. She's also considering pursing a graduate degree in education to integrate her passion for conservation with her newfound passion for teaching.

The most rewarding part of Helena's internship was seeing the kids' improvement after each session and watching them engage and want to learn about natural resources and the environment week after week.

"These internships are all about being brave and getting out of your comfort zone, diving deeper into your interests and growing as a student, a future professional, and an individual."
- Emma Cailene, Master's in Communications and Media Management.

To improve learning for Colorado 4-H members and volunteers, Emma created a series of instructional videos on food preservation safety and led a major update of the 4-H Cultural & Ethnic Foods manual to better represent cultural recipes and histories. As part of her internship, Emma completed a 30-hour Master Food Safety Advisor training, conducted informational interviews, scripted and directed an 18-hour multi-day shoot, and coordinated publication on the 4-H website.

Emma commented that her internship deepened her skills in production, project management, and design. She also said, "I love that these internships are connected to CSU, but also expand to other organizations in the community. I would 100% recommend this experience for others!"

THANK YOU TO OUR DONORS & PARTNERS

27% of the 2025 internships were funded by donors.

"Although I'm always a little bit jealous of the INCREDIBLE experiences our interns get to have, I'm beyond grateful that this important program exists for our students! This program is ONE-OF-A-KIND at CSU and benefits significantly from donor support."
- Thea Barela-Rounsaville, Associate Director of Development, CSU Engagement & Extension and CSU Libraries.

The Extension internships all have a service-learning component, allowing students to contribute to communities while advancing their own academic journeys. The support of our partners made a tangible difference to our Extension interns this year, with 18 of the 66 internships receiving donor funding. Several of the donors even met with interns they supported to learn more about their research and how the interns see their internship experience benefitting their future careers. Thea said, "It was really special to show our donors the incredible impact of their giving."

The 2025 Extension internship program was generously funded by these partners: College of Agricultural Sciences, College of Veterinary Medicine and Biomedical Sciences, Walter Scott, Jr. College of Engineering, College of Liberal Arts, CSU Office of Engagement and Extension, CSU Libraries, Garrett Collopy Foundation, Ron and Judy Blackwelder, The Spalding Family, The White Green Family Charitable Trust, President's Office, Provost's Office, Vice President of Research's Office, and the Colorado Department of Agriculture, ADWP Grant. If you're interested in supporting the Extension internship program, please contact our Advancement team at OEE_giving@colostate.edu or by visiting **col.st/pwghl.**

"THANK YOU for sending us videos of the students whom we supported via our internship gift. We were happy and pleased that we could support them!"
- Ron Blackwelder, internship donor.

Fran and Jim Collopy (middle) visited Isabel Browning (second from right) in Routt County. As an Extension Wildlife Technician intern, Isabel supported wildlife and aquatic biology goals in the Routt National Forest.

Henning Krüger explains different types of drones to interested community members. Henning's internship was funded by Ron and Judy Blackwelder.

Members of the Spalding Family pose with Dylan Mitchel and Ava Becker-Church, two of the interns they supported, at the Extension intern poster session.

Rachel Owen poses with a soil sensor in a field in Montana. Her internship on soil health in the Rocky Mountain region was funded by the White Green Family Charitable Trust.