

How to build capacity through coaching, mentoring and internship programs

Peer-to-Peer Learning Session notes

Presentations

CSU Extension: Rebecca Hill and John S.

- Extension addresses student career goals by getting students out in the field through internships throughout Colorado. They started with 10 internships and are now up to 35.
- There are 2 Extension staff + a professor on campus who also does student mentoring. The paid staff work 10 weeks.
- Once a year, there is an Extension Forum, where all the interns present their work,
- One of the biggest challenges to the program is the geography – some of the internships are “out there” in remote areas. These areas get much fewer applications for internships.
- Choosing on-site mentors is very important – they must be good hands-on teachers.
- John S. did his internship with Extension in Hotchkiss, CO looking at codling moth control methods. These moths are agricultural pests on fruit trees. He set up net traps and evaluated their effectiveness in moth control for organic farmers. The internship opportunity gave him hands-on experience in entomology research and how it connects to the community.

Quivira Coalition: Sarah W.F

- Quivira Coalition has an Agrarian Apprenticeship Program. It’s a career track for people who want to pursue agricultural careers. The program focuses on large landscapes and regenerative agriculture.
- Currently have 20 apprenticeships in NM, CO, MT, and CA. They are 8 months long. Training includes teaching opportunities as well as direct training on ranches and farms. Apprentices are also offered supplemental education within a specific area of focus.
- QC supports both the mentors and the apprentices with a 3-day orientation workshop to connect them to each other, as well as a Regenerative Agriculture Conference where all mentors and apprentices get together and discuss the programs’ current and future goals.

- 85% of the program graduates are still working in agriculture or a closely related field. Early apprentices are now serving as mentors in their own right thus building a strong inter-generational exchange in agriculture.
- Very important that mentor and apprentices are a good match for one another.
- QV is helping other organizations start similar programs in their communities, thus building a strong network between these programs. They are also creating Ranch Management Apprenticeships for strong organization-to-organization exchange.

National Forest Foundation: Ben Iry and Adam

- NFF has the Conservation Connect fellowship program.
- NFF connects the fellows to the U.S. Forest Service and leads conservation efforts to build common ground with stakeholders and improve recreation planning.
- The program connects local communities to their local national forest through collaborative groups and planning.
- This is new program. Had 2 fellows in 2018, 10 in 2019 and 9 fellows in 2020. It's a year-long program with an in-person orientation and a summer practicum. Most projects have been based in Missoula, MT.
- The stipend is \$5,000 and helps with recruitment of fellows, as does the practical hands-on experience. Fellows select their top three projects from the list of available projects.
- A challenge is that NFF is always looking for projects that connect the fellows to a national forest - they need an on-going list of projects. NFF also needs good mentors who can mentor well. Also, fellows come from across the country so this makes networking a challenge.
- NFF needs to do a better job of identifying and building relationships with academic institutions that deal with collaboration to get more applicants from other areas.
- Adam was 1 of the 2 original fellows from 2018. His academic career gave him a limited understanding of community issues, and the NFF fellowship has helped him participate in the "real life story" of people. This experience will help him in a land management agency career.

General Discussion

- *Is the goal to hire the fellows in the future?* Ben: No, not directly at this time.
- *What is the difference between an apprenticeship and an internship?* Sarah: Interns are just getting their feet wet; they are just getting into the field and ask to come to an organization for training. Apprenticeships give you the opportunity for an in-depth

experience, to share previous experiences and further an already active career.

Organizations seek out the apprentices to see how they can help the organization.

- *How much time does it take to manage these programs?* Sarah: we have 2.5 full-time staff who work in 4 states. It takes a lot of time and dedicated commitment. Rebecca: we spend 2 months of our time plus we have to convince the Dean for funding. Interns are mentored by extension agents in the field, so they spend more time with the interns. Ben: 10% of 2 employees' time. The mentors in the field do most of the work.
- *Do Apprentices start their own farms after the program?* Sarah: 80% of the apprentices do not grow up in agriculture, but want to get into the field. Post-apprentice career paths are varied as land ownership is not an option for most. So they look at leasing land, contract grazing, working with a land agency, etc.
- *How do interns get matched up with the right mentors?* Rebecca: mentors interview the interns and choose which one they want to work with; Sarah: we do extensive mentor training- what are their skills, ability to teach? Teaching style? We let the apprentices know the options for guidance and ask them "how much direction do you need?"

Key Points

- Getting Interns to apply to remote locations is hard. The more remote the location, the fewer applications.
- Need mentor training for mentors – mentors need to be good teachers and want to do it. The mentor/intern needs to be a good relationship match.
- Challenging to get good projects lined out before the application period.
- Can be time consuming. The bigger or more in-depth the program, the more staff and time that are needed.

Next Steps

- Have a central place where organizations can find out what types of internship/mentoring programs exist... (CRAFT?)
- Identify resources that document the best practices for hosting internship/mentoring programs.
- Create a network between these types of programs to share opportunities, trainings, projects that want internships, etc.

References: National Forest Foundation PPT presentation, CSU Extension Internship website

<https://intern.colostate.edu/>