Community Farm Graduate Fellowship 2017-2019:

Mountain Roots Food Project and the Master of Environmental Management Program at Western Colorado University welcome applicants for our 2019-2021 Community Farm Graduate Fellowship. The Fellowship provides an opportunity for an outstanding graduate student to engage in the research, project design and management, operations, and innovation for the Mountain Roots Community Farm & Gardens initiative. The Fellowship is also a launch point into for-profit, non-profit, and research-based sustainable agriculture and a deeper understanding of its critical role in the development of a resilient food system.

Background: The Master of Environmental Management (MEM) program at Western offers interdisciplinary training for building environmental and community resilience. The MEM is a two-year graduate program integrates the ecological diversity, natural resource wealth and emerging sustainable community movements of the Colorado Rockies as its central classroom. More information on the program can be found at www.western.edu/mem. Mountain Roots Food Project (MRFP) is a Gunnison/Crested Butte non-profit focused on building resilient food systems in the upper Gunnison Valley (www.mountainrootsfoodproject.org).

A large-scale concept for the Mountain Roots valley-wide farming enterprise is being developed across multiple sites and with multiple partners. Currently, a 2-acre portion of the Coldharbour Ranch and two urban gardens models and teach cold climate sustainable agriculture. Our Farm & Gardens are a venue that models and teaches active conservation and sustainable agriculture with a focus on community engagement and provides visibly integrated elements of food justice, social equity, education, and resilient food systems. The farm enhances agricultural diversity of Gunnison Valley by demonstrating methods in which growers can produce a wide variety of annual and perennial food crops (both plant and animal based) on an ecologically sustainable scale and enhance biological diversity by emphasizing native and agricultural plant species and demonstrate how the two can coexist. As the project grows, this working community farm will have acreage for crop production and research/experimentation, farm animals, a farm stand and /or CSA, and education programming for all ages. Complimentary elements, which may be developed on alternate locations, include 3-to-4 season greenhouse facilities, additional animal husbandry sites, and a commercial kitchen.

The Fellowship Award
The Community Farm Fellow will receive $10,000 towards tuition in the Master of Environmental Management program over two years. Year One: $2,000, with $1,000 as a cash stipend to the student in the summer and $1,000 going to year one tuition. In Year Two, the fellow receives $8,000 in tuition assistance. There is a possibility that housing can be provided or subsidized.

Year One:
- Summer 2019 - The Farm Fellow will commit to 18-20 hours per week (roughly three, 6-hour days) during the summer, with appropriate accommodations for course work and intensives. The fellow will rotate through all positions on the farm and in our urban gardens, to gain experience and local knowledge of the farm’s production, animal husbandry, CSA distribution, community engagement, and more.
• Fall 2019 and Spring 2020 – The Fellow will commit to an average of 12 hours per week (roughly three half-days) in addition to course load. The Fellow will play an integral role in developing a specific aspect of the Farm and Gardens Program as identified during the summer as the next step in taking the project to the next level. Because this is a new project, initiative and new ideas and will be the key to a successful and meaningful experience.

Year Two (Master’s Project): The Farm Fellow makes a commitment to apply their research and skills in structuring and completing their Masters Project to meet one or more of the Mountain Roots Farm & Gardens Program’s strategic plan / development goals.

• Estimated hours are ca. 16-18 hrs/ week during the school year and 24/hrs week in summer. A high-quality project will provide specific, interdisciplinary, shovel-ready design and application of one or more focused farm-based initiatives and will result in the actual implementation of these initiatives.
• Projects on deck include: Development of a comprehensive beginning farmer training program / apprenticeship; development of comprehensive Animal Husbandry program; and development of a local food hub.

Successful candidates should demonstrate:

• Working knowledge and experience with sustainable agriculture and its principles such as: whole-farm planning, permaculture principles, crop rotations, cultural management of perennial crops and fruit trees, cover cropping, soil and plant sciences, and regenerative farming concepts, organic and/or biodynamic agricultural operations, animal husbandry, and agroecology.
• Proven ability to collaborate, negotiate and build consensus with multiple external and internal constituencies, including visitors, across varied professional, educational, and socio-economic levels.
• An entrepreneurial approach to acquiring resources and unlikely partners; genuine interest in ‘start-up’ project design.
• Working knowledge and sensitivity toward food justice, social equity, and resilient food systems.
• Versatility: equally comfortable and confident working in the field or in the office, working independently and with people. The role requires a balance of time and energy spent on sustainable agriculture as well as program planning, budgeting, concept development, and community outreach.

How to Apply:
Please submit a letter of interest and résumé to Holly Conn, Executive Director of Mountain Roots, director@mountainrootsfoodproject.org. The fellowship award is also contingent on acceptance to the MEM program, and an application must be submitted to the MEM program by April 1, 2019. For questions please email the above address or call 970-417-7848.