

VIMS SUMMER CAMP 2020

Frequently Asked Questions

The following is a list of Frequently Asked Questions about the VIMS 2020 Summer camp programs.

- **How much do the summer camps cost?**
All of the summer camps are free.
- **Why is there a lottery system as opposed to signing up first come, first serve?**
The lottery system was implemented in 2010 to make the application process fairer for all students, schools, and families. Everyone has equal time to find out about the camps and get their applications turned in by the April 1st deadline.
- **Why do you ask on the application if our student had attended camp last year?**
Because of the popularity of the VIMS Summer Camps, and in an effort to reach more students every year, students are no longer allowed to repeat the same camp (except for NERRS Nerds). For example, if your student attended Bay Buddies camp last year because they were entering 3rd grade, and now they are entering 4th grade and still eligible for Bay Buddies camp, they will not be eligible to attend. This will not affect your chances of being selected if your student has aged up into a different camp. For example, if your student attended Bay Buddies camp last year because they were entering 4th grade, and now they are entering 5th grade and eligible for Chesapeake Champions, their prior camp attendance will not affect their preference in being accepted.
- **What are the times of the camps?**
The Bay Buddies and Chesapeake Champions camps run from 9am-4pm Monday through Friday. NERRS Nerds will run from 9am-4pm Monday through Thursday (no camp on Friday). Estuary Explorers will also run from 9am-4pm Monday and Friday, but we will be traveling on Tuesday for our two nights on the Eastern Shore and may leave earlier that morning to avoid traffic. We'll return Thursday evening.
- **Where do the camps take place?**
All camps are held at the Virginia Institute of Marine Science in Gloucester Point, VA, with the exception of Tuesday-Thursday of Estuary Explorers which will take place on the VIMS Eastern Shore campus in Wachapreague, VA. But parents will still drop off and pick up from the Gloucester Point location.
- **Can I sign up my student for the same camp, two years in a row?**
No (besides NERRS Nerds).
- **What does it mean by under-served or low-income family? Why are you asking for that information?**

In an effort to increase the diversity of students that participate in the VIMS summer camp programs, we have reserved some camp slots for students who identify as under-served or low income. Some examples of under-served audiences within science education may be minorities, students whose parents have not attended college, students lacking secure housing opportunities, or low-income homes. If you have questions about whether you qualify as under-served or low income, feel free to email Sarah Nuss at mcguire@vims.edu.

All students are welcome to apply; this is a new effort to ensure representability of all students in our programs.

- **Which camps are day camps and which are overnight?**
Only two nights (Tuesday and Wednesday) of the Estuary Explorers camp is overnight. All other camps are day camps.
- **I have multiple students in the same age group. Is it possible to sign up all of my students for the same camp?**
You may apply for as many students as you would like for a camp. However, each individual student must be selected by either the lottery system (for grades 3-4) or application process (for grades 5-12) in order to be able to attend the camp. That is, if one of your students is selected for a spot in the camp, it does NOT guarantee that their sibling/friend also has a spot.
- **My high school student is graduating this year, but is still interested in applying for the NERRS Nerds camp. Are they eligible?**
Yes. Students may apply for NERRS Nerds camp if they are entering high school next year through those that have just graduated in 2020.
- **I have students in different age groups. Can my 7th grader attend the 4th grade camp so that they can attend camp in the same week?**
No. All students must apply for the camp designated for their own age group.
- **Why did you get rid of the Sea Squirts camp?**
Due to changes in funding availability, and requests of the donors, we have moved our focus to older students this year (there is a new camp for high school age students). We apologize for any disappointment this causes, but we hope you will check back next year and apply as your students gets older.
- **When I turn in my application, does that guarantee my student a spot in the camp?**
No. Turning in an application does NOT guarantee your student a spot in the camp. For the Bay Buddies camp, the application enters your student into a lottery for camp spots. For the Chesapeake Champions, Estuary Explorers, and NERRS Nerds, the essay will be used by a review panel to select students for the camp. By April 10th you will receive an email notifying you if your student was selected (either through the lottery system or application process) for a spot in the camp.
- **Why do you ask for an adult reference's name for the NERRS Nerds and Estuary Explorers camp?**

Adult references are requested only for the NERRS Nerds and Estuary Explorers camp in case the review panel would like to contact a reference for more information on the student during the selection process. References will only be contacted if more information is needed. References do not need to submit a written reference, and do not have to be the student's teacher.

- **When will I know if my student is selected for camp?**

All students will be notified by April 10th if they were selected for camp.

- **I completed the online application for Chesapeake Champions. Is that all I need to do?**

Yes, as long as you attached your essay to your application for Chesapeake Champions, Estuary Explorers, and NERRS Nerds, you have completed your application. For Chesapeake Champions, the questions must EACH be 100 words for Chesapeake Champions, and 200 EACH for Estuary Explorers and NERRS Nerds. This is the primary way that we select students for these camps so please encourage your student to spend some time working on their essays.

- **What are the essay questions for each camp?**

- **Chesapeake Champions –Answers to EACH QUESTION should be a minimum of 100 words.** Please be sure your student includes their name at the top of each page of their responses. Please note that applicants will be selected primarily by their responses to these questions. Please use as much detail as possible as it will likely be a very competitive year for applications. You will be notified by April 10th, 2020 if your student(s) was or was not selected for camp.
 - Why are you interested in marine science, and the Chesapeake Bay in particular?
 - Please explain your past experiences with marine science, and/or what you are looking forward to learning about marine science.
 - How will you share the information you learn about at camp (personal, at your school, at home, in your community)?
 - What characteristics do you have that would make you a good camper?
- **Estuary Explorers - Answers to EACH question should be a minimum of 200 words.** Be sure student includes their name at the top of each page of their responses. Please note that applicants will be selected primarily by their responses to these questions. Please use as much detail as possible as it will likely be a very competitive year for applications. You will be notified by April 10th, 2019 if your student(s) was or was not selected for camp.
 - Why are you interested in marine science, and the Chesapeake Bay in particular?
 - Please explain your past experiences with marine science, and/or what you are looking forward to learning about marine science.
 - How will you use or share the information you learn about at camp (personal, at your school, at home, in your community)?
 - What characteristics do you have that would make you a good camper?

- NERRS Nerds - Please be sure to include your name at the top of the response. ***Each response should be a minimum of 200 words per question.*** Junior Counselors will be chosen based on the answers on the application, your answer to the statement of interest (below) and possibly through an in-person interview process.
 - Why are you interested in attending the NERRS Nerds camp? What experiences do you hope to take place in during the camp?
 - Please explain your past experiences in marine science, including what you would still like to learn or do.
 - What experience do you have sharing information with younger students?
 - What characteristics would make you a good Junior Counselor?

- **What happened to the Junior Counselor positions?**
 Junior Counselor positions are still available, but require participation in the NERRS Nerds summer camp for high school students PLUS an additional week of volunteering as a Junior Counselor.

- **How are Junior Counselors selected for camp positions?**
 High school students must apply and be selected for the NERRS Nerds summer camp. To be selected, students must first complete an application by the camp deadline (April 1st). Students must also submit an essay response to the questions posted on the camp website by April 1st. From the applications, a review panel will select applicants to move onto the next round which is in-person interviews. Applicants that are selected for interviews can do so in person or via Skype. Interviews are approximately 10 minutes, and allow the CBNERR educators to meet the student in person. JC applicants will be notified by April 10th if they are selected for an interview.

- **Who is leading the camps? Have all staff completed a background check?**
 All education staff (and interns) working with the students during day camps and overnight camp have completed a background check. There are two full-time staff that will be in attendance during the camps, Sarah Nuss and Tara Rudo. Both are seasoned full-time educators at the Chesapeake Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve. Sarah has been leading camps for the past 15 years, and Tara has been leading field education programs for over 3 years. In addition, each year we take on education interns, typically college students who are interested in marine science education. They receive training and guidance from the full-time staff prior to camp beginning, and also are required to do a background check prior to camp starting. We also have Junior Counselors (high school students) that volunteer during the camps.

- **We do not live in the Gloucester area. Are we still eligible to apply for camp?**
 Yes. While we do accept a certain percentage of campers from the Gloucester/Mathews region, we do accept applications from students out of the area, and even out of state. We accept a certain percentage of local students because our funding comes from private donors that wish to give back to the local community.

- **I am not able to pick up my child at 4pm. Can I have someone else pick them up each day?**

Yes, we do allow other adults to pick up students from camp, as long as their name is listed on the child's registration form (which will be sent out after campers are selected). We do not allow campers to be picked up from camp by any car service (i.e. Uber, Lyft), only personal acquaintances.