

## VIMS SUMMER CAMP 2023

### Frequently Asked Questions

The following is a list of Frequently Asked Questions about the VIMS 2023 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 2<sup>nd</sup> deadline.
- **What are the times of the camps?**  
All camps will run from 9am-4pm Monday through Friday. Parents can drop off starting at 8:45am, but no earlier. We ask that parents are on time for afternoon pick up. Estuary Explorers will take place from Sunday afternoon through Friday afternoon, and students will spend the entire week at the VIMS Eastern Shore Lab.
- **Where do the camps take place?**  
Bay Buddies and Chesapeake Champions are held at the Virginia Institute of Marine Science in Gloucester Point, VA. Estuary Explorers is held on the Eastern Shore of Virginia at the VIMS campus in Wachapreague.
- **Can I sign up my student for the same camp, two years in a row?**  
No.
- **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](mailto:meguire@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?**  
 Bay Buddies and Chesapeake Champions are day camps and Estuary Explorers is an overnight camp.
- **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 5-8) 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 a Junior Counselor position. Are they eligible?**  
 Yes. Students may apply to be a Junior Counselor if they are entering high school next year through those that have just graduated in 2023.
- **I have students in different age groups. Can my 7<sup>th</sup> grader attend the 4<sup>th</sup> 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. 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 and Estuary Explorers camps, the essay will be used by a review panel to select students for the camp. By April 7<sup>th</sup> 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.
- **When will I know if my student is selected for camp?**  
 All students will be notified by April 7<sup>th</sup> if they were selected for camp.
- **Is the statement of interest required?**  
 Yes. For Chesapeake Champions, Estuary Explorers, and Junior Counselors, there are Statement of Interest essay questions that must also be answered and attached to the application form. These questions must EACH be 100 words for Chesapeake Champions, and 200 EACH for Estuary Explorers and the Junior Counselors. 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.
- **How are Junior Counselors selected for camp positions?**

High school students must apply and be selected for the Junior Counselor positions. To be selected, students must first complete an application by the camp deadline (April 2<sup>nd</sup>), including responses to the essay questions. 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 Zoom. Interviews are approximately 10 minutes, and allow the CBNERR educators to meet the student in person. Students will be notified by April 7<sup>th</sup> if they were 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 have completed a background check. There are two full-time staff that will be in attendance during the camps, Sarah Nuss and Matthew Thayer. Both are seasoned full-time educators at the Chesapeake Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve. Sarah has been leading camps for the past 19 years, and Matthew has been leading field education programs for 6 years. We will also 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. Lastly, Junior Counselors (high school students) will 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 also 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.