

Maine Space Grant Consortium
Maine Research Internships for Teachers and Students
(MERITS)
Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) for
Students, Teachers and Host Institutions

FAQ for High School Students:

- 1) Will this internship be considered as part of my requirements to graduate?
 - a. No, although we believe that an internship opportunity through this program will have both a significant educational and career impact for students in the future.

- 2) How are students selected for internships (How will my application be evaluated?)
 - a. Each student application will be reviewed by MSGC's independent review committee. Applications are evaluated on the program's eligibility criteria, completed application form, positive teacher recommendations and outstanding personal essays.

- 3) What will host institution expect of me?
 - a. Host institutions will assign a mentor to each student. Students will be assigned specific activities or tasks related to a project, and will be given the appropriate materials, resources and background necessary to conduct said activities or tasks. Students are expected to comply with institutional policy, to participate for the entire seven week period, to participate in and conduct the assigned tasks to the best of their ability. If students have questions regarding assigned tasks, they should not hesitate to ask their mentor for assistance.

- 4) What are the dates of the internship?
 - a. The summer 2009 internship dates will be determined based on the end of school and will be communicated as soon as possible. Expected beginning date at this time is June 29 with an orientation day. Students will report to companies on June 30 and the program wraps up on August 14, with a program celebration day.

- 5) Do I get to choose the host institution where I would intern?
 - a. Students are required to choose their top three selections of host institutions from a list provided by MSGC. However, this does not automatically guarantee that students will be placed in one or any of the institutions selected.

- 6) Will I be given an interview?
 - a. Yes. Applications will be reviewed by MSGC's independent review committee. Those students whose applications are a good fit with the program's goals will be interviewed by MSGC's review panel. Students who meet the criteria and pass this first interview process will undergo a second interview with the host institution representative.

- 7) Will I be required to travel far?
 - a. MSGC will do everything possible to ensure that students are placed at institutions within or near his/her community/region so that travel will be kept at a minimum. If a student is able to travel outside of their community or region, this should be specified on the application. Students are responsible for any cost associated with travel.

- 8) How much will I be paid?
 - a. Students will be paid a minimum stipend of \$2,240 payable in three increments. The first increment includes half of the entire stipend and will be paid after the student completes their third week of the program. The second increment includes the remaining half, less 15% and will be paid to the student on the last day of the program at the program celebration day. The final payment, the remaining 15% withheld in the second increment, will be paid to the student after a final report is received by MSGC. Stipends are taxable and students will receive a 1099 misc form from MSGC at the end of the year. Students will receive their stipend from MSGC and not the host institutions.

- 9) How long is the internship?
 - a. The internship is for seven weeks. This includes one orientation day at the beginning of the internship and one celebration day at the end of the internship.

- 10) How long are the work days?
 - a. The length of the work day, unless otherwise indicated by the host institution, is an eight hour day. Daily start and end times are determined by the host company policy and will be communicated to you at the host institution interview.

- 11) Do I need to work weekends?
 - a. A typical work week is Monday through Friday (hours to be determined by host institution). It is not MERITS policy to have students work on weekends and any deviation from this policy has to be agreed upon by the host institution, MSGC and the student on an individual basis.

- 12) What grade/age do I need to be?
- a. Students must have completed their junior year in high school and be at least 17 years of age by June 30, 2009.
- 13) Am I required to do anything else above and beyond the scope of the internship?
- a. Students are required to attend the one day orientation and one day project celebration at the beginning and end of the program. Students will present their experiences at the project celebration event. Students are also required to send MSGC a brief weekly update by email (preferred) or by fax on their progress, submit a final report at the end of their internship and to complete a survey provided to them by MSGC. Each student will be assigned to a member of the MSGC Board of Directors who will be a friendly ears and voice for the student to share experience, concerns and solicit advice about the internship. Students will also need to keep MSGC staff updated on their academic and workforce progress, and contact information for a minimum of six years.
- 14) Am I required to submit a written report?
- a. Yes. See question 13 above. The format for the final report will be provided to students at the orientation day.
- 15) Who do I contact with questions while the internship is underway?
- a. Questions related to the program in general should be directed to Jana Hall at MSGC (jana.hall@msgc.org or toll free at 1-877-397-7223). If a student experiences a problem with a host institution that cannot be resolved between the student and the host institution directly, then contact Jana Hall as soon as possible.
- 16) What if the internship is not working out?
- a. If problems arise during the internship between the student and host institution, or employees of said institution that cannot be resolved in house, then MSGC staff should be contacted and informed of the problem. We will work with the student and the host institution representatives to identify and correct the problem.

FAQ for Teachers in identifying qualified high school students:

- 1) What type of student would be appropriate for a MERITS internship?
 - a. Students eligible for this program must:
 - i. Be U.S citizens

- ii. Be a high school junior or senior in the fall of 2008 (students must complete their junior year by the time of the summer internship)
 - iii. Be at least 17 years of age by June 30, 2009.
 - iv. Have maintained a GPA equivalent of a B or higher
 - v. Demonstrate strong interest in science, technology, engineering or mathematics (STEM)
 - vi. Have some knowledge of computer applications
 - vii. Commit to participating for the seven weeks
 - viii. Have daily transportation to and from the host institution
 - b. Students who would make good candidates for this program also should exhibit maturity, possess good communication skills, are able to work both independently and with a group and should be motivated to excel in their position.
- 2) Should students be high academic achievers or have high technical and/or manual skills?
- a. Students must have a GPA equivalent of a B or higher. Students do not need to have a high level of technical or manual skills, but should exhibit other skills necessary to participate in the program. See question 1 above.
- 3) As a nominating teacher, what responsibilities do I have during the internship?
- a. Students are required to have two teacher recommendations. Your responsibility as a nominating teacher is to complete the form to the best of your knowledge and to mentor and guide the student through the internship process when necessary.
- 4) Will I receive interim reports from either the host institution or from the student intern?
- a. It is not MERITS policy to require the host institutions or students to submit a report to the nominating/mentoring teacher. If a teacher would like to receive their students final report to MSGC, please contact the MSGC staff.
- 5) What type of internship opportunities are available to students in our region?
- a. MSGC has been working with many institutions across the state. A list of participating institutions will be posted on our website (<http://www.msgc.org/programs/precollege/MERITS.php>) by the middle of December for all to access. Students are required to select their top three choices for consideration.
- 6) Are students responsible for their own travel to and from the host institution?
- a. Yes. Students will be responsible for their own transportation and any cost associated with it.

- 7) Is my school responsible for any costs or possible liabilities?
 - a. No. Schools are not responsible for any cost for the student to participate in the program and are not responsible for any liabilities.

- 8) What type of activity or participation will the host institution be responsible for?
 - a. Each host institution will provide a mentor to the student. Mentors will be responsible to provide assistance and guidance to the student, to assign activities or tasks, to include students on their “team”, to share project objectives and outcomes and to meet with, and assess student’s progress.

FAQ for Host Organizations and Mentors:

- 1) Do we get to choose the student we feel would best fit with our organization’s needs?
 - a. Yes. Each student application undergoes a review process by MSGC’s independent review committee. This board will select the best candidates for the program and make the initial match between institution and student based on mutual interest and need. MSGC will forward a small number of applications to the host institution to review. The host institution will select which applicants to interview from this pool. MSGC will help with the scheduling of the interviews and once a host institution has identified the student it wishes to bring into the company, MSGC will inform that student.

- 2) What materials, resources or benefits do we need to provide to the student?
 - a. Host institutions are asked to provide students with the appropriate materials, supplies, and resources, to be able to conduct their research or assignments effectively during the internship. Institutions should provide students with sufficient preparation and orientation to be effective in their role at the institution. This includes identifying specific tasks suited to the student’s skills so as to increase their substantive knowledge in line with their educational and career plans. Host institutions do not provide students with any employee-related fringe benefits.

- 3) Do we need to report on the student’s progress?
 - a. No, this is not a requirement during the internship but we would welcome such reports at the discretion of the mentors. MERITS students are required to send MSGC brief weekly progress reports. Assistance from the Mentors to remind the students to send their reports would be appreciated. At the conclusion of the summer program the mentors will be ask to fill out an evaluation survey to assess

the internship program and whether the host institutions would like to continue to participate in the program.

- 4) As a mentor, how much of my time is required to spend with a student?
 - a. Because the MERITS program is not just a job, it is a research and educational experience, we ask each mentor to help guide and provide assistance to each student, in a type of learning environment. Mentors should share with students, project objectives and outcomes, and to also include students in their “team”. Mentors are employees of the institutions and are not paid through this program by MSGC to act in this capacity. MSGC has provided host institutions an institution and mentor guide to further address this question. The guide is available to download on our website at <http://www.msgc.org/programs/precollege/MERITS.php>.
- 5) Is there a cost-share or match requirement to participate in the program?
 - a. Yes, host institutions are required to contribute at least 50% of the student’s stipend. Each MERITS student will receive a total \$2,240 stipend directly from MSGC. Half of the stipend will be funded by MSGC and the other half by the host institution. Contributions from the host institutions are payable directly to MSGC. Host institutions may provide additional contributions, payable to MSGC, beyond the 50% minimum to increase the student’s stipend beyond \$2,240 if so desired. Host institutions should be able to either take a business deduction or a charitable deduction for their contributions. Host institutions should consult their own tax advisors on this issue. MSGC is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization.
- 6) What is the student intern’s legal status?
 - a. Students are not considered employees of the host institutions, or of MSGC’s. Institutions do not pay the students directly. Exchange of stipend funds will be between MSGC and the student. MSGC will provide students with a 1099 misc. form at the end of the year for the stipend received.
- 7) What is our insurance obligation?
 - a. Students are not employees of the host institution or of MSGC’s, therefore there is no insurance or liability obligation to the host institution or to MSGC. Students are treated as independent contractors and receive a 1099 misc. form at the end of the year.
- 8) Can we get more than one student intern?
 - a. Yes. However, the host institution may be asked to contribute 100% of the stipends for any additional MERITS interns. If a host institution wants more than

one intern, they must indicate so on the institution information form provided by MSGC. Host institution forms can be downloaded on our website at <http://www.msgc.org/programs/precollege/MERITS.php>. All contributions from the host organization are payable directly to MSGC. MSGC will compensate the interns directly to maintain the legal status discussed in Question 6.

- 9) Who do I contact with questions while the internship is underway?
 - a. Questions related to the program in general should be directed to Jana Hall at MSGC (jana.hall@msgc.org or toll free at 1-877-397-7223). If host institutions experience a problem with a student that cannot be resolved between host institution and student directly, then contact Jana Hall as soon as possible. Questions related to the student's work experience or capabilities should be directed to the student.

- 10) What if the internship is not working out?
 - a. If problems arise during the internship between the student and host institution, or employees of said institution that cannot be resolved in house, then MSGC staff should be contacted and informed of the problem. We will work with host institution representatives to identify and correct the problem.