

Maine Space Grant Consortium
Maine Research Internships for Teachers and Students
(MERITS)
2012 Program Announcement
Student Component

The Maine Space Grant Consortium (MSGC) is pleased to announce the availability of funds to support summer research internships for highly motivated Maine high school juniors for the summer of 2012.

Since its inception in 1992, MERITS has provided summer internships to hundreds of high school students and teachers at more than 70 businesses and non-profit laboratories across Maine. MSGC took ownership of the MERITS program after a couple of years of hiatus and revamped the program. The 2011 MERITS programs will support internships for high school students and teachers (teacher portion released separately).

MSGC is an affiliate of NASA's National Space Grant College and Fellowship Program. The mission of the Maine Space Grant Consortium is to support NASA's mission and its Mission Directorates by strengthening Maine's aerospace related research and education assets, which are critical to the Agency.

1. Program Description

The MERITS Program provides summer research opportunities for highly motivated high school students who are interested in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) careers to experience 'real-time' applications of STEM in a research-focused work world at host institutions conducting research and technology development. By doing so, MSGC seeks to expose students to career opportunities in Maine and to provide a direct way by which Maine businesses and research communities can attract young people with high potential for possible future employment.

Clear expectations and mentored research lead to valued results for the students, teachers and the host institutions. Students learn and apply research protocols and processes to a project related to research disciplines such as, but not limited to, information technology; semiconductor engineering; electrical engineering; environmental studies; molecular genetics; medical research; estuary and ocean science; marine biology; precision manufacturing; geology and soil science; and analytical chemistry. Participation in the MERITS Program will provide students with an increased understanding of the relevance of high school requirements as preparation for STEM opportunities.

2. 2012 Internship Duration

The summer internship program is seven weeks and will begin on or around (depending on the last day of school) Monday, June 25, 2012 and ends (on or around) Friday, August 10, 2012. Final dates will be released during the spring, 2012

3. Stipend

MERITS student will receive a total stipend of \$2,240. Payments will be made directly to students in three or four separate increments, to be determined before the start of the program.

4. Eligibility Requirements

Student applicants must meet the following eligibility criteria:

- Must be a U.S. citizen.
- Be enrolled as a junior in a Maine high school in the fall of 2011.
- Be 17 years-of-age before June 30, 2012.
- Demonstrate an interest in science, technology, engineering or mathematics
- Has some knowledge of computer applications.
- Has maintained a GPA equivalent of a B or higher.
- Commits to participate Monday through Friday for the seven-week internship.
- Be in a position to provide daily transportation to/from the host institution.

5. Host Organizations

MSGC maintains a list of participating host organizations which vary each year. Each host organization will identify research topics for MERITS students to be involved in. MSGC will do its best to match students with the best internship experience based on student interest and participating host organization's projects.

The selection process will match a student's interest with those of host institutions located in the county in which student applicants reside. Students and parents are responsible for arranging daily transportation to and from the host organizations.

Student applicants may elect to work at host organizations outside of their county of residence. Under these circumstances, it is the responsibility of the students and their parents to arrange housing, if needed, as well as transportation. To facilitate the selection process, the student **must** indicate in the application that they have secured housing and transportation.

In rare occasions, a highly qualified student considered for a MERITS internship may only be matched with a host organization outside of his/her county of residence. Under these circumstances, MSGC will contact the student and parent and discuss these opportunities. If

both parents and student agree to the match, it is the responsibility of the student and parents to arrange housing, if needed, as well as transportation.

6. Application Process

To be considered in this highly competitive program, the completed application package *must be received* at MSGC by no later than ***Friday, December 9, 2011***.

All application forms are available for download in a single file from <http://www.msgc.org/programs/precollege/MERITS.php>. The forms are in Microsoft Word format.

A complete application package for students includes forms and documentation for the following nine (9) areas:

- a. Student Information Form
- b. Student's Education Career Information
- c. Educational Transcript
- d. Personal Essay (Maximum of 300 words)
- e. Interest and Career Preferences
- f. Computer Skills
- g. Host Institutions and Research Topics
- h. Parental Consent Form
- i. Teacher Recommendation

The entire completed application package should be sent electronically to Jana Hall at the following address: jana.hall@msgc.org. The following materials which require authentication or a signature should also be mailed (original hard copies) to the below address:

1. Educational transcripts
2. Parental Consent Form
3. Last page of the student application form-student signature page (page 5, Host institutions and research topics page)
4. Teacher recommendations

MERITS Program
Maine Space Grant Consortium
87 Winthrop Street, Suite 200
Augusta, Maine 04330

Unofficial academic transcripts (if available) will be accepted via email with your application package if you cannot scan and send original transcripts.

Teacher recommendation letters/forms can be emailed directly to Jana Hall by the recommending teacher if that teacher so desires.

7. Selection Process and Schedule

The MSGC MERITS Selection Committee will conduct the selection process.

Matching – The Selection Committee will review all applications and match their research topic interests with available host organizations in the county in which they reside.

Interviews – The Selection Committee may conduct initial telephone interviews with applicants in January (date to be determined and communicated at a later date). The purpose of the interviews is to allow the Selection Committee to gauge the interest and motivation of applicants in the internships and in STEM careers. Those found eligible will be invited back for a second round of face-to-face interviews with the selection committee before the end of the February Break.

Face-to face interviews will be conducted in one central location to accommodate the geographical variation. MSGC staff will contact applicants and arrange a time for the interviews. Applicants who fail to attend scheduled interviews without advanced notification will not be further considered for a MERITS award.

Student Selection – The Selection Committee will convene in late February or early March to review the findings of the interviews and select applicants for MERITS awards.

Award Notification – By late-May, MSGC staff will notify applicants of their selection. At the time of notification, applicants must confirm their acceptance of the award and commitment to participate throughout the duration of the internship.

8. Post-Selection Requirements

Each applicant selected for a MERITS award must meet with the identified mentor at the host organization before the start of the internship. The purpose of this meeting is two-fold. First, the meeting permits the applicant and mentor to discuss the research project. Secondly, and more importantly, it provides an opportunity for them to get to know one another and determine if there is a “fit”.

Following the meeting, each applicant must contact MSGC by e-mail to provide an overview of the meeting and to confirm his/her interest in working at the host organization and with the mentor. Communications with MSGC immediately after the meeting is strongly encouraged to provide an opportunity to identify another suitable host organization if necessary. If another host organization is found, the applicant will be required to meet the mentor and report back to MSGC.

9. Internship Schedule

Pre-Internship Orientation – (Final dates to be determined) On Monday, June 25, 2012, a one-day orientation will be scheduled for all MERITS awardees. Student’s parents and teacher

advisors are encouraged to attend the orientation. The purpose of the orientation is to provide the awardee an overview of the program and clearly define expectations and requirements. The orientation also provides awardees the opportunity to meet their colleagues.

Internship Period – (Final dates to be determined) Internships start on Tuesday, June 26, 2012. All MERITS awardees are expected to report to their host organizations at that time. Awardees must provide a brief progress report to MSGC via e-mail that shares their weekly experience. The format for this e-mail will be provided at the orientation. Awardees must adhere to the policies and regulations of their host institutions. Failure to do so may result in immediate termination of the internship.

End of Internship Celebration – (Final dates to be determined) On Friday, August 10, 2012, all MERITS participants, parents, high school advisors and mentors are invited to celebrate the awardees' summer research experiences. At the celebration, each awardee will be required to make a short (up to 15-minute) PowerPoint or other presentation sharing their experiences. A format for the presentation will be provided at the orientation. The location will be provided once confirmed.

Final Report – MERITS awardees are required to submit a final report on their summer research experiences. The report is due at MSGC by *Friday, August 17, 2012*. The format for the final report will be provided at the orientation. MSGC will withhold 15% of the final payment until the final report is submitted.

10. Student Follow-up and Tracking

To comply with NASA's National Scholarship and Fellowship Program, MSGC has implemented a student longitudinal tracking policy. Awarded students will be required to send to MSGC updated contact information and a brief report on his/her academic and/or workforce progress, for a minimum of six years from the student award date. Historically updates are requested from students twice annually.