

The National Youth Science Camp: Frequently Asked Questions

What is the National Youth Science Camp?

The National Youth Science Camp (NYSC) is one of the nation's premier programs in secondary science education. Since its inception in 1963 as part of West Virginia's Centennial Celebration, the four-week summer program has offered educational forums and recreational activities that encourage the development of thoughtful scientific leadership.

How are the delegates selected?

Two students are chosen to represent each state as delegates to the National Youth Science Camp. Delegates attend the camp the summer after they graduate from high school, and have demonstrated exceptional academic achievement, leadership in school and community activities, and a genuine interest in the sciences. The governor of each state appoints a selection coordinator who initiates a competitive process to choose two delegates and two alternates

How much does it cost to attend?

Delegates attend the National Youth Science Camp at no expense, transportation included. This has been true throughout the history of the camp so that selectees can attend regardless of their financial status

How is the camp funded?

The NYSC[®] was totally supported by the State of West Virginia from its first session in 1963 through its twentieth session in 1982, and is now funded through contributions to the National Youth Science Foundation[®], Inc., a 501(c) (3) foundation registered with the Internal Revenue Service. While a generous portion of the funding still comes from the State, support increases each year from the private and corporate sectors. Along with numerous individual contributors, including NYSF Trustees and NYSC alumni, other contributors in recent years include: Allegheny Energy, American Electric Power*, Ashland Foundation, Carpenter Foundation, The Charleston Gazette, Daywood Foundation, ECA Foundation*, Dickinson Properties Limited Partnership, DuPont Corporation, ECA Foundation, Federated Coal Company, Fidelity Foundation*, Guest Services Inc., Jamey Harless Foundation, Herscher Foundation, Hewlett-Packard, International Industries Inc., Jackson & Kelly LLC, Bernard H. & Blanche E. Jacobson Foundation, Charles T. & Mary Ellen Jones Fund, Lockheed Martin, McJunkin Corporation, Millipore Foundation, National Radio Astronomy Observatory, Nortel Networks, Oracle Corporation, Sidney Stern Memorial Trust, Struers America, and the Verizon Foundation.

How does the NYSC accomplish its goals?

The National Youth Science Camp offers hands-on small-group learning experiences, a provocative lecture series, and a challenging outdoor program. The hands-on experiences and lectures expose delegates to current work across the spectrum of scientific disciplines. Visiting scientists are invited based on their reputation as leaders in their fields and on their ability to share up-to-date research with the delegates. The atmosphere at the NYSC is engaging and supportive. Guests, staff, and delegates have time to relax and discuss ideas over meals or while on the hiking trail. Recent guest speakers at the NYSC include Dr. Noel Hinners of Lockheed-Martin (a former deputy director of NASA), Dr. D.B. "Zoon" Nguyen of Northern Minnesota Radiation Oncology, Dr. Jill Morris of the National Institutes of Health, and Dr. Vladimir Chaloupka of the physics department of the University of Washington.

Where is the camp held?

The National Youth Science Camp is held at a rustic camp near Bartow in the eastern mountains of West Virginia's Potomac Highlands, close to the National Radio Astronomy Observatory at Green Bank and within the unique wilderness areas of the Monongahela National Forest. Because of the camp's location, delegates have the opportunity to visit the NRAO as well as such West Virginia landmarks as the Spruce Knob-Seneca Rocks National Recreation Area, the Dolly Sods Wilderness Area, and several other destinations.

What happens on a typical day at the NYSC?

A typical day begins with a morning lecture from a guest scientist. After this, some groups of students leave to go on outdoor trips while the rest break up into small groups for their hands-on, small group science seminars facilitated by guest scientists or NYSC staff members. The afternoon is reserved for free-time activities such as optional seminars, athletic and recreational activities, art, and music. All NYSC program areas are open--Natural Sciences, Physical Sciences, Applied Arts, Music, and the computer lab. While free time seminar topics can be scientific, they often depart from science and encompass the personal interests of delegates, staff, and guests. All activities challenge delegates to approach problems with creativity or to try something new. Activities range from fishing to philosophy, ballroom dancing to biological technologies. The atmosphere is purposefully informal. An evening science lecture follows dinner.

What is the NYSC outdoor program like?

To reinforce and encourage well-rounded development, the NYSC's scientific program is supplemented by a fun and challenging outdoor program. Three times during camp, all delegates go on overnight outdoor trips which may include backpacking, rock climbing, caving, kayaking, mountain biking, or science field experiences. Many of these activities

are also offered on "day trips", making it possible for most delegates to try several different offerings.

Why do the delegates travel to Washington, D.C.?

Because the National Youth Science Camp is only five hours from the nation's capital, delegates are able to take advantage of the area's extensive scientific and cultural offerings during a three-day trip. Each year, Senator Robert C. Byrd of West Virginia honors the delegates with a luncheon to which he invites his colleagues in the Senate. Recent keynote speakers include Dan Goldin, administrator of NASA, and Bruce Babbitt, Secretary of the Interior. The National Zoo, the National Institutes of Health, the US Army Medical Research Institute for Infectious Diseases, and the NASA Goddard Space Flight Center all have provided special tours and speakers for the NYSC delegates. Delegates also may spend some time in the capitals many museums, historic buildings, and monuments during the trip.

Who should apply to the NYSC?

Potential delegates for the 2002 camp should meet all of the following guidelines:

- be candidates to graduate from high school in the spring of 2002;
- be available to participate in the entire NYSC program (tentatively scheduled for June 27 to July 22, 2002);
- intend to pursue a profession oriented towards science, mathematics, engineering, or medicine;
- demonstrate superior academic proficiency, including recognition in mathematics and/or the sciences;
- demonstrate an application of leadership abilities and social maturity through involvement in both school and community activities;
- demonstrate skills and achievements outside the realm of science and outside the realm of academic pursuits; and
- demonstrate a curiosity and an eagerness to explore many and varied topics.