

Frequently Asked Questions

What is GEMS?

The Gains in Education of Mathematics and Sciences (GEMS) program promotes the education of regional youth in Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM). GEMS is offered by the Army Educational Outreach Program and mainly funded by the Department of Defense to encourage students to enter into STEM related careers. The Construction Engineering Research Laboratory (CERL) provides a summer program under the GEMS umbrella. GEMS is also available at other locations around the United States of America.

What can I expect as a participant of GEMS at CERL?

As an interested and enthusiastic middle school or high school student in the CERL GEMS Program, you will be exposed to a genuine, hands-on laboratory experience. GEMS will also help you in STEM related courses at school. The program offered at CERL is led by "near-peer" mentors who develop, explain, and execute each teaching module with you.

What is a "near-peer" mentor?

Near-peer mentors are high school students or college students and recent graduates from related fields of academia. These mentors are closer in age than the traditional teacher and create a more relaxed atmosphere of learning. The responsibilities of a near-peer are to be role models to the students, promote high-level science and math classes, and act as expert resources concerning college life and career pathways. Near-peers are selected for their technical experience and attitude. Their inclusion is integral in enhancing each and every GEMS student's interest and achievement.

What is a teaching module?

Our teaching modules are interdisciplinary, inquiry based, hands-on learning experiments that explore the various fields of STEM academia. We utilize real-world examples and merge theory with practice to cultivate a broad and well rounded understanding within each student. We require that every teaching module be fun and engaging.

Where is the program located?

The program will be at the Construction Engineering Research Laboratory, 2902 Newmark Drive, Champaign, IL. The modules will be taught in a laboratory or training room setting.

Is there a fee to participate?

The program does not have a fee and in fact, offers an educational stipend for students. This stipend is not a paycheck and is only available upon completion of the entire program.

What are the dates and times that the program starts and ends?

Please plan to arrive between 8:00 a.m. and 8:20 am. Each day is split into a morning and an afternoon session with various breaks throughout the day. We break for lunch midday and require that students bring a packed lunch. Dismissal is at 3:30pm. Please plan to pick up your child by 3:45 p.m.

When can I register?

Registration Window: 1 February to March 31, 2017

All registrations are considered and placed, as best as possible.

Notification of placement is sent out by April 30, 2017 by email.

No paper forms will be sent out unless special request is made.

How do I apply?

If the link on the front side doesn't work for you, you can also apply by accessing the Army Education Outreach Program (AEOP) website <http://www.usaeop.com> choose "Program" button on the left margin and then select "Middle School" and "GEMS". Next, select "Locations" and under "Illinois" select "US Army Engineer Research...Champaign, IL" Finally, scroll to "Applications Window" and select "Apply Here" to the right of "GEMS Student Program" then scroll to access the application "Apply" button on the bottom right side of the page. Note that your GEMS Program site location is ERDC-CERL, Champaign. As part of the application, each student must upload two letters of recommendation.