



VIRGINIA SPACE GRANT CONSORTIUM

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NEWS RELEASE

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Virginia Space Grant Consortium Receives 2019 *Programs That Work Award* from Virginia Mathematics & Science Coalition

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The Virginia Earth System Science Scholars (VESSS) program, offered by the Virginia Space Grant Consortium (VSGC), has received the prestigious 2019 *Programs That Work Award* from the Virginia Mathematics & Science Coalition (VMSC). The award recognizes exemplary mathematics, science, and integrated science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) programs for which there is evidence of a positive impact on student or teacher learning.

Virginia Earth System Science Scholars is an interactive online Earth System Science course combined with a problem-based summer academy at NASA that uses the excitement of NASA's work in Earth Sciences and planetary research as a learning platform. The program emphasizes the study of Earth as a "system of systems" with dynamic systemic interplay. VESSS is a free program open to qualified high school juniors and seniors statewide that engages the student in real world investigations of the Earth and its systems using the latest research and NASA's Earth Science mission data. In the course, scholars complete seven web-based modules and a capstone project that can earn four dual-enrollment college credits in Geology from Thomas Nelson Community College.

Upon successful completion of the VESSS online course, scholars who performed well in the course are selected to attend a seven-day residential summer academy at NASA Langley Research Center in Hampton, Virginia, for which they can earn an additional college credit in Geology. At the academy, students interact with scientists, engineers and technologist mentors as they design a satellite mission. The Summer Academy experience allows students to refine their 21st Century workforce skills as they work in a real-world setting in positions mirroring a NASA research team, such as engineers, budget analysts, communication specialists, or scientists. The students present their missions to a panel of NASA representatives, academia, and industry professionals at the end of the academy.

The VESSS program is a partnership between the Virginia Space Grant Consortium, NASA Langley Research Center's Science Directorate, and Hampton University's Center for Atmospheric Research and Education. Thomas Nelson Community College offers dual enrollment college credit for the program. Funding is provided by the Virginia Space Grant Consortium, the NASA Minority University Research Program through Hampton University and the Commonwealth of Virginia, with industry support from the Virginia Aerospace Business Association and the National Institute of Aerospace.



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Since inception in 2015, VESSS has educated 606 students from all of Virginia's legislative districts. VSGC longitudinally tracks VESSS scholars with respect to their college and career plans. Over 90% of academy participants report in follow-up surveys that they are pursuing a career in a STEM field. As one recent scholar noted, "*VESSS opened my eyes to the connectedness of Earth's different systems. The program pushes the boundaries of problem solving, teamwork and creativity to address national science needs.*"

Founded in 1989, VSGC is a coalition of Virginia universities, state agencies, NASA centers and other Virginia institutions with a strong interest in STEM education, research and workforce development. The Consortium undertakes a wide range of educational programs at the pre-college and higher education levels as well as informal education venues. Learn more about the VSGC at www.vsgc.odu.edu and VESSS at <http://vsgc.odu.edu/vesss/>.

Programs That Work Awards have been provided by the VMSC for more than ten years. VMSC is a private, nonprofit 501(c)(3) organization dedicated to achieving excellence in mathematics and science education for Virginia's K-12 and higher education students. More information on the Virginia Mathematics & Science Coalition can be found here <http://www.vamsc.org/>.

Awardees will be honored on January 15, 2019, from 10:00 am - 3:30 pm, at the State Library of Virginia, 800 East Broad Street, Richmond, Virginia. Awardees will participate in a poster session and panel discussions.

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