

# FAQ for NIU STEM Outreach Camps

## **1. Where is Northern Illinois University?**

Northern Illinois University is in DeKalb, IL, located 65 miles west of Chicago and 45 miles southeast of Rockford. NIU is a comprehensive educational institution that has a regional and national reputation for the quality of its students, faculty, staff, facilities and research activities. NIU's 514-acre main campus in DeKalb is located one mile north of the East-West Tollway (Interstate 88) near the junction of state highways 38 and 23.

## **2. Do potential campers need to be residents of Illinois?**

No, we have campers from across the United States and from overseas.

## **3. What is required in order to apply for camp?**

First, parents must apply, preferably online, and pay the appropriate deposit, \$100.00 for early registrants, but higher as we near the start of camp. A link to the appropriate form is at the top of each camp session's description page. Applying online automatically signs you up for a payment plan for the fee balance. Follow instructions on the form for payment information and completion of online application forms.

After your initial registration and deposit, you will receive electronic application forms via email from an online system called CampDocs to complete the remainder of your camper's application. Please note that most of our communication is through email, so be sure to use an email address you check often.

## **4. Do the camp fees cover everything?**

Yes, the camp fees cover food, lodging, instruction and all camp materials. However, campers may want to bring snacks and money for souvenirs during the week.

## **5. Are discounts available?**

Discounts are printed on the camp fee page. We keep the fees as low as possible for all campers, so discounts are minimal. The deepest discount is for early applicants.

## **6. Are there payment plans or is full payment required at the time of application?**

To reserve the camper's spot in the camp, you need to provide a deposit. If you are applying more than 60 days prior to camp, you will be charged a \$100.00 deposit at that time and then will be charged two additional times: at 60 days prior to camp, you will be charged 50% of the camp fee minus the \$100.00 deposit and at 30 days prior to camp, you will be charged the remainder of the fee. If you apply within 60 days of camp, you will be charged 50% of the camp fee at the time and the remainder at 30 days prior to camp. If you apply within 30 days of camp, you will be charged the full amount at registration. **Please take this payment plan into consideration when providing us with a card number as all charges will be made to the same account.**

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## **7. Does NIU provide any financial aid or scholarships for campers?**

Yes, though the funding available for scholarships varies from year to year. Scholarships will be awarded to campers of any ethnicity or gender based on need and demonstrated interest in STEM. Due to limited funding, the application is not being posted on this site, but needs to be requested by email from Judith Dymond at [jdymond@niu.edu](mailto:jdymond@niu.edu). Scholarships are available starting every January. Applicants are encouraged to apply as soon as possible. Those awarded scholarships are expected to pay the balance owed for the camp. All scholarships are awarded in the form of discounted registration fees.

We award scholarships in two amounts, \$350.00 and \$600.00, for residential camps and one amount, \$175.00, for day camps, based on need and availability of funds. No scholarships are 100% as we believe campers who have found a way to help cover even a small portion of their camp fee are better able to appreciate the gift of the scholarship. We also had a few no-shows when we offered full scholarships; those families denied other campers the opportunity to participate.

A non-refundable \$10.00 application fee is required to apply for the scholarship. This is used to hold a place in the desired camp as we review the applications. Our scholarship funding is limited, so we may not be able to award all who request help. The \$10 application fee is applied to the camp fee if a child or teen participates in camp, whether or not they receive a scholarship.

## **8. If NIU is not providing financial aid for a camp I am interested in, where can a camper look for financial support?**

Many local organizations offer financial support for campers. Check with your local service groups, booster clubs and your school guidance counselor.

## **9. Who are the counselors at the camp?**

Counselors include college instructors, graduate students, undergraduate students and teachers. Each person working in our camps is required to have an extensive background check and receives appropriate training.

## **10. How big are the camps?**

Most camp sessions are limited to 20 or fewer campers. Some weeks there are several sessions running at one time, with a possibility of 100 campers total those weeks. The exception to this are the Early Middle School Camps, “It’s Not Magic, It’s STEM” camp and “From the Moon to Mars, and Beyond!” The limit for these two camps is 40 campers. Design challenges, activities and laboratory investigations are done in small groups of 2 to 5 participants. The adult-camper ratio is approximately 1 to 10.

## **11. Are all camps residential? May campers leave at night and come back in the morning?**

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All day camps are for grades 2 to 5. All other STEM camps are residential and campers must stay overnight. Only under extraordinary circumstances would commuting campers be considered.

## 12. Do campers stay in the residence halls on campus?

- **NIU DeKalb Camps**  
Campers reside and dine in newly renovated residence halls on NIU's campus in DeKalb, Illinois. The residence hall is air conditioned. Two campers share a room; **campers may request a specific roommate on the application forms**. Linens and pillows are not provided. There is adult supervision at all times as camp counselors live in the residence hall alongside the campers.
- **NIU Lorado Taft Camps**  
Lorado Taft Outdoor Education Center is a 141-acre campus near Oregon, IL. Middle school campers reside in bunkhouses and dine family-style in the conference center dining hall. There is adult supervision at all times as camp counselors live in the bunkhouse counselor rooms alongside the campers. We will spend Friday on the NIU DeKalb campus, finalizing presentations and presenting work to parents.

## 13. What should campers bring to camp?

Campers should bring casual clothes and a raincoat or poncho. **Long pants and sunscreen are required for all camps as are comfortable, sturdy walking shoes with closed toes.** We also recommend campers bring a sweater or light jacket for evenings and air-conditioned rooms. Additionally, campers should bring towels, all personal hygiene necessities, their own personal pillow and bed linens or a sleeping bag. They might also want to bring extra money for snacks, souvenirs, etc. **Campers attending sessions located at Lorado Taft must also bring bug-repellent.** Please refer to the parent information email for other necessary items.

## 14. What should campers NOT bring to camp?

Please refer to the behavior contract. *Please, note that NIU is not responsible for any lost or stolen personal items.*

## 15. When and where should campers arrive at camp?

For most residential sessions, camp check-in and orientation are on Sunday, early evening in the main lobby of the assigned residence hall on NIU's DeKalb campus. Residence hall assignment and check-in time will be emailed to campers approximately two weeks prior to the start of camp. Campers participating in a session at Lorado Taft will check in Sunday, late afternoon.

## 16. Will Sunday dinner be served to campers?

Lorado Taft campers will be provided a Sunday evening meal. DeKalb campus campers will **not** be served an evening meal on Sunday.

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## 17. What can parents and campers expect upon arrival Sunday evening?

- **NIU DeKalb Camps**
  - Parents and campers should look for a STEM Outreach banner in the residence hall lobby to find the check-in table for our camp. There may be a few other camps checking in at the same time. Campers will sign in and will receive their nametag and room key at this time. Parents of campers with medication or any health or learning concerns should speak with the designated camp directors at this time.
  - Parents are welcome to accompany campers to their room to help them settle in. Once campers check in, they are not to leave the assigned area without speaking to camp administration. We ask that parents leave before orientation.
- **NIU Lorado Taft Camps**
  - Parents and campers should follow the directions to the Lorado Taft Outdoor Education site within Lowden State Park, Oregon, IL. Campers will sign in, receive their nametag and room key at this time. Parents of campers with medication or any health or learning concerns should speak with the designated camp directors at this time.
  - Parents are welcome to accompany campers to their bunkhouse to help them settle in. Once campers check in, they are not to leave the assigned area without speaking to camp administration. We ask that parents leave before orientation.
  - There are several casual dining opportunities in Oregon and Byron for families after dropping off their children.

## 18. Is there an end of camp presentation or ceremony?

Presentations are for residential camps only. At 2 p.m. on Friday during the week of camp, campers make short, group presentations on what they have done/learned during the week. Campers are excited to share this with family members, so please try to make it to the presentation if possible. All campers spend Friday on the NIU main campus in DeKalb, even if they began the week at Lorado Taft in Oregon, IL. Each family will receive information on their camper's presentation at check-in Sunday and in the parent letter sent out before camp.

## 19. When and where should campers depart camp?

- **NIU DeKalb Camps**
  - At the end of the presentation on Friday afternoon campers whose parents are present may leave with them to go to the residence hall and retrieve their possessions. They will be packed up before breakfast Friday morning, so it should not take long. They need to return their room key to the residence hall front desk and sign out.
  - Parents or guardians who are not able to attend the presentation should pick their child up at the residence hall between 3:15 and 4 p.m. Campers will be escorted to the residence hall by counselors at the end of the presentation between 3 and 3:30 p.m.
- **NIU Lorado Taft Camps**

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- Campers will be bussed to NIU DeKalb with their luggage on Friday morning. At the end of the presentation on Friday afternoon, campers whose parents are present may leave with them to retrieve their possessions from our secure location.
- Parents or guardians who are not able to attend the presentation should pick their child up at the designated location between 3:00 and 4:00 p.m. Parents will be notified of this location by check-in time on Sunday. Campers will be escorted to the designated location by counselors at the end of the presentation between 3 and 3:30 p.m.

### **20. Where do we park to pick-up or drop-off campers?**

- **NIU DeKalb Camps**
  - When you arrive on Sunday, you can drop off campers and luggage in front of the residence hall they will be staying at for the camp. Please move your vehicle to a nearby parking lot and park in any unmarked parking spot while completing check-in and settling your child in his or her room. If campers drive themselves, they must obtain a free parking permit from the residence hall front desk the day they arrive. While the camper is at camp, they will not be allowed to drive their vehicle. Parking information for pick-up on Friday will be sent to parents prior to check-in as it may vary depending on residence hall assignment. Check your parent information email for details.
- **NIU Lorado Taft Camps**
  - Drop-off parking is in the parking lot for NIU's Lorado Taft campus, within Lowden State Park.
  - Pick-up parking is in the Parking Deck on Carroll Ave. at NIU's Main Campus in DeKalb, IL. The presentations and luggage storage will both be nearby.

**Regardless of where campers are dropped off, all campers will be picked up from the main DeKalb campus.**

### **21. What if a camper needs to be picked up early?**

A parent or guardian must give the camp director a dated and signed letter that explains:

- Who is picking the camper up and their relationship to the camper (aunt, uncle, friend, etc.).
- The date and time the camper will be picked up.
- The date and time the camper will return (if applicable).

For safety reasons, we cannot release any camper without a dated and signed letter from their parent or guardian. The individual picking up the camper will be required to show valid identification.

### **22. If NIU STEM will be picking up my teen at O'Hare International Airport or another location, what time should we plan for their arrival?**

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- Before and after care for day camps will be provided by the DeKalb Park District at an additional cost. Transportation to and from Hopkins Park will be provided by NIU.
- We will be happy to help you arrange travel for high school campers via taxi or rideshare to and from the airport or train station, but we are unable to provide transportation ourselves.
- **For campers arriving from Chicago by bus:** Greyhound Bus has a stop in DeKalb at NIU Holmes Student Center. Please plan for your camper to arrive at 5:30 p.m. \*, when a STEM Camp staff member will meet the camper and escort them to the residence hall. Departure with the Greyhound Bus will be arranged similarly as the bus leaves at 3 p.m. \* and a staff member will escort campers to the stop. Please check with the bus company for unaccompanied minor regulations.

Be sure to confirm travel arrangements in time to make other arrangements if needed.

### **23. What is a typical schedule for a camp?**

7:30 a.m. - Breakfast

8:15 a.m. - Two morning sessions with a short break between

Noon - Lunch

1:30 p.m. – Two afternoon sessions with a short break between

5:00 p.m. - Dinner

6:30 p.m. - Special evening activity

9:00 p.m. - Campers return to residence halls

9:30 p.m. – Quiet time

10:00 p.m. - Lights out

### **24. My child has food allergies. How will that be handled?**

Please alert us to any food allergies and/or dietary restrictions on the health form. Your child will be choosing food cafeteria style in the residence hall. A variety of prepared items is available each day, with options for students with dietary restrictions clearly labelled. The only items that are not labeled are commercial foods, such as the cereal dispensers, for example. For those items, students will be expected know what brands are safe for them or not. The dining staff has been trained in preparing gluten free meals, but we must be notified in advance if this is required.

If we provide snacks for special events, we will be sure to accommodate any allergies.

**Note that Lorado Taft is a nut-free campus.**

### **25. What if my child becomes sick while at camp?**

For most illnesses, the camper will be isolated from the other campers with a counselor to watch over them while you are notified to come pick them up. We can arrange, with your permission,

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to bring a camper to an immediate care center if needed, a useful option for campers from a greater distance.

### **26. What are the evening activities?**

In the evenings, campers will participate in a variety of STEM-themed recreational activities including a movie night, stargazing and making liquid Nitrogen ice cream. Campers will also have at least an hour of free time every night that they may use to relax and call home.

### **27. Who do I contact for additional information?**

If you have additional questions, please contact NIU STEM Outreach at (815) 753-0533 or [STEMoutreach@niu.edu](mailto:STEMoutreach@niu.edu).