Q: What do you think is special about PennDesign’s M.Arch program? What kind of experience do you think is absolutely special in PennDesign? Do you think the studio has a very friendly atmosphere? Do students help each other a lot? In your opinion, you learned most from yourself, your classmates, or your professors?

A: What's special in my opinion is the variety of methodologies and resources students have access to, and working together with fellow students is generally encouraged. Students here really tend to help each other out a lot, which is also special and promotes a friendly atmosphere. In my opinion I learn the most from my classmates. It makes a profound difference when students are here working together because everyone is from a completely different background, in many senses. From professors there are a lot of larger lessons learned, and they help give students a critical eye and ways to make their arguments for design as strong as possible. From myself I've learned how to be open to these new perspectives but in a critical way so maximal energy goes toward thoughtful yet logical design that is open to new creative ways of thinking and producing work. One last point on why the program is special: PennDesign is a very social environment, so many students live and hang out together outside of the program, and especially at the happy hours in the building every Friday (whether or not you are there to imbibe, talking to others always happens and students really expand on things they've learn to run ideas across one another) and at other activities like our Beaux Arts ball, or other organized events.

Q: Is there any opportunity for students on the wait list to apply any sorts of scholarship or financial aid?

A: We have VERY limited need-based aid. That being said, we do offer the same aid to US as int'l students for the most part.

Q: Is studying architecture very intense in UPenn? For example, I'm now an undergrad, but I barely sleep during weekdays, is it the same in graduate school?

A: Studying architecture is always what you make of it. Students here choose their battles when it comes to time management. Some are married with children and choose to go home at the same time every day (except for review times typically) while others are fresh out of undergrad and choose to stay up more than they might need to. It's certainly intense but people tend to survive just fine! Once you find the balance between school and personal time you'll figure out your personal productive cycle.

Q: I have learned that UPenn place great attention on parametric design. So I’m wondering whether the department of Lanscape architecture pay the same attention on parametric design?

A: Parametric design in landscape can be an option but it is not currently a focus for students. There are also a range of studio projects and parametric design, for example, may not be the most viable or relevant solution for something like a housing project in the desert. There are options to explore it, such as digital media courses, but in landscape there is much less focus on parametricism.
Q: I had a question about the AA program that is offered in the final year of M.Arch 1. Are there limited spots for sign up and does being an Advanced Placement candidate effect the possibility of being selected for it?

A: There are a limited number of spots for sign up, but it's not too competitive. Almost everyone who wants to go can have the opportunity to.

Q: When you said limited, does it mean I have a little chance to get financial aid? I feel I can afford the first year, but probably not the rest 2. Do you think it's possible for me to get any other help from UPenn?

A: Occasionally the department has extra financial aid to give to students in their last year, and gives it out based on merit. This doesn't happen every year, though.

Q: What about the employment situation of landscape architecture in Philadelphia? How are the career prospects of the UPenn students? Additionally is there usually an availability of additional merit based funds that can be awarded to those that choose to enroll before the Fall semester of the first year begins?

A: Employment for Landscape Architecture in Philly varies, and really depends which opportunities you seek. Many students find work at firms here for summer internships which often times lead into jobs down the road, either part time during semesters or full time after graduation. We give out more than our budgeted amount of merit scholarships to the accepted candidates. If enough people who are getting these awards decline our offer, then yes, we will redistribute it to the students who have accepted our offer. But it's also possible that most of the students who were offered merit aid will accept our offer in which case we won't redistribute.

Q: Could you talk about the PennDesign's publication? If students are enrolled in the MArch program, can they participate in the process of publishing, such as editing and research?

A: It is possible to get a Research Assistantship position with the Department of Architecture. I'm not positive about what this work would entail. You could write directly to the Department to find out: arch@design.upenn.edu.

Q: I want to ask the current students about the approximate amount of your living expenses except the tuition and general fees at PennDesign.

A: It really does vary. I would say probably $600-$2000 a month depending on who you are, housing situation, eating out, etc. Rent does vary substantially in the city based on your preferences and that is most of the additional costs.

Q: I also have some questions about living in Philadelphia. Because I saw online that the parking permits for commuter students are very expensive, do most students drive to school? Do you suggest live far away and drive or live near and walk? Which way works better and cheaper?

A: I would say that very, very few students drive to school. Probably around 90% of students in the program either walk, bike, or use public transportation and most live within a mile or two of the school. It is definitely cheaper to live in places not directly near campus, but there is the trade-off of convenience, especially for classes with many studio meetings. I would say the tradeoff is more of how much time you are willing to spend, rather than to drive or not to drive.
Q: I am very excited about the MFA program. My only concern is that of funding. I spoke with Joshua Mosley about this. He said that if I visit, and that all is a perfect fit, then he can push regarding merit aid. However, I am finding it very difficult to come up with the money to fly out there (I live in Utah) in time. How much merit aid is available on average/what am I possibly missing out on?

A: Merit awards really vary, from $5,000 to $15,000 per year. I would imagine that Joshua would LIKE to offer you more aid, but I'm not sure how much more he has available at this point. Did he tell you that each student gets a TAship each semester?

Q: Yes, TAship has been brought to my attention.

A: Also besides the normal TAships that give you a stipend, there are special ones (very few, like two per semester) that give some tuition remission and also stipend. Joshua could tell you more about those.

Q: I have questions for any urban planning majors—how much of the classwork is GIS related (%)? What is the expectation for how much GIS factors into employment (I don't have a sense for how regularly it is used in the workforce) and what kinds of jobs have Penn urban planning majors been able to acquire upon graduation?

A: The planning program can have as much or as little GIS as you want. It really does vary. While one class is required, you can take one every semester if you would like to. Jobs also vary by if you want a more technical job or a more policy/consulting job. As for the jobs, they really do vary, but I would say to look at the American Planning website or Planetizen as a sample to see what kind of jobs are out there for planning graduates.

Q: I see on the PennDesign website that an extensive number of prizes and awards are offered to students. However, I do not see any external links to apply for them. Are they run through PennDesign itself and how does one apply?

A: Some of the prizes are awarded to our students at the end of each academic year, based on criteria specific to the awards. And most of the scholarships are what fund our merit awards.

A: For those worried about money and paying for school, while Penn does offer limited merit or need based scholarship it is worth elsewhere for scholarships. I know that I and other classmates have done this and have been successful which reduces the burden of some of the cost of school.

A: For a list of outside scholarships we have, check out our website here: www.design.upenn.edu/financial-aid/outside-scholarships.

Q: Can each graduate student get a TAship opportunity each semester?

A: All MFA students get TAships. That's because we have an undergraduate program in Fine Arts. MCP students can usually get at least one TAship during their time here. You should contact Prof. Landis for more information: jian@design.upenn.edu.

Q: I want to ask about RAship also. Are there many opportunities to participate in research at departments? When I asked a professor, they said that it is hard to join at first year because of intense classes.

A: I know that several second years are working with professors on research and that is something that comes by building relationships with professors in the first semester or two.
A: There are plenty of work opportunities besides research for preservation students though. Every classmate of mine has a job and works at least 10 hours a week.

Q: Could you please explain more about work experiences?

A: I'm not sure what concentration you are interested in but many of my classmates in ConSci work in the ConSci lab, others work with John Hinchman in his lab. Some work in nearby historic sites like Fairmount Park doing bricks and mortar. Some do architecture firm work, some do museum type jobs. Some do office related work for school and others are just TAs. Others work on GIS and design projects in the area.

Q: I also see that Penn's campus is located near a rather large train station. Is it easy to get around Philadelphia and beyond to, say, NYC or Washington DC by train if you do not plan on having a car?

A: Yes, it's very easy to get to DC and NY from Philadelphia. Not only does Amtrak run from 30th street station in Philly to NY and DC, there's also Megabus and Bolt Bus.

Q: Joshua Mosley said that there are other opportunities that he would like to talk with me about. I'm very interested. Trying my best to get out there...Could you please clarify: The scholarship listed on my acceptance letter, is that already the merit aid or is it need based?

A: I'm not sure to be honest with you! We're up in the computer lab so I don't have access to my files! But please feel free to email me at weston@design.upenn.edu and I'll answer tomorrow morning.

Q: I have a question regarding a waitlist. I am wondering if you accept additional materials. If you do, what kind of information I can send.

A: Unfortunately, we usually won't take late application materials at this time. Only because it could become unfair to others on the wait list.

Q: How many students are studying at HP?

A: There are about 20 of us in the core group and about 5-10 dual degree students each year. The second year class is slightly larger with about 25-30 students in the core class. I really enjoy the small class size because there is more one-on-one time with my professors.

Q: I have one last question regarding the additional merit based funds that may or may not be awarded before Fall of 2014. A lot of universities have set their commitment date to April 15th. Would we be notified of the availability of these funds before or after that date?

A: It depends on when people respond. We also set our commitment date to April 15. If enough people respond before then, we will have a sense of how our merit allocation looks. But that's a big IF!

Q: Do you think I will have time to do a part time job if I'm a full time student?

A: It depends on the job. I've sustained two work study jobs during most of my time here because I am able to determine the hours I work and have done occasional side jobs, so I guess it really ties back to time management and having flexible options.
Q: For city planning graduates, is there any work opportunities can help us reduce our financial burden at PennDesign?

A: There are part time opportunities, but usually students work part time between 5-15 hours a week, and typically in their last year. For the first year, students tend to work 5-10 hours, and these jobs are usually on campus and flexible. There are often also paid internship opportunities during the summer that are full time. While this will not cover the full cost, it can help with some small expenses.

Q: I was accepted into the MCP-Urban Design and I have a few questions. First, what type of projects are usually part of the Studio course work: scale, location and what is the approach the school promotes to address the studio problem/topic?

A: The projects really do vary year to year and what topic that you are choosing. This year we have an economic development/transit project working in NYC, housing urban design studios in Beijing, Brazil, and Toronto, a local sustainability studio in Philly, and small towns in PA. Again, the teaching style really varies by the professor/location. Even the size varies between 6-14 students. But all of the projects incorporate "real world" situations with real clients, a final report, and individuals speaking in studio from the field.

Q: How can I get TAship at HP? Should I just ask professor about TAship?

A: When you get here all kinds of TA ships will go up. However they are usually reserved for second years. But sometimes in the spring there are opportunities for first years to have a TA ship in the first year. I am a TA for a law class this semester and it is about 6 hours of work a week. I'd really look for other job opportunities in your first semester.

Q: What is the relation one can establish between Studio projects and research work from Penn IUR?

A: While some students work with IUR, the studio projects are related to the studio clients themselves and not the IUR branch of PennDesign.

Q: Do I get an advisor prior to enrollment that could help me out in choosing electives in order to fulfill my interests?

A: After you accept your offer, you will be assigned an advisor based on your interests. Or, if you would like to talk to some of the specific urban design professors in advanced, you can email them directly for specific advice (such as Evan Rose). Sometimes graduate assistants will hold workshops to teach students programs, some students watch tutorials outside class, or ask other students for help. There are also some digital media courses. And the digiblast pre-grad program that exposes students to these programs.

Q: I had a question about the technical skills that are required of M. Arch students. What computer programs are generally used for graduate work? Looking at Pressing Matters, there seems to be a strong focus on 3D modeling. Are there courses set in the curriculum that will allow individuals to learn potential modeling and digital skills?

A: Modeling and digital skills are developed in many ways, and students work across a variety of platforms depending on experience, the studio, and personal interests. Rhino, Maya, Maxwell, Adobe Suite, Vray, Grasshopper, Generative Components, some scripting are all fair game.
Q: Can I get an opportunity to join in the Center for Research on Preservation and Society during my first year? When I participate in there, can I also get RAship?

A: I think for that you should email Professor Randy Mason rfmason@design.upenn.edu. He knows the most about that. As for RAship I believe you have to apply for that through housing. I know that they are competitive. See here. http://www.collegehouses.upenn.edu/join/ga/faq.