Welcome to our webchat! We have students here from MArch, MEBD, MCP, MS HP, and MLA. Please type in your questions and we'll be happy to answer!

Q: Hey! Once I accept the offer of admission, in how many days will I receive a PennKey?

A: Unfortunately, the process can take about 1-2 weeks once you accept the offer. This is because many different offices work together to process new students. Also, we are working with a new admissions system and there have been a few technical issues causing delays. Please be patient. We apologize for any inconvenience this causes you.

A: Thanks! Is there a sample course structure online that I can refer to for the community and economic development concentration?

A: Take a look online here: http://www.design.upenn.edu/city-regional-planning/graduate/concentrations The City Planning department has listed each concentration with a number of courses that would count towards them.

Q: Hello PennDesign students! I am a prospective student for the MCP program based in Chicago right now. I have some questions regarding the transportation specialization. Are any of you guys in that specialization? I was wondering what the curriculum is focused on. Is this a lot of case studies? Is there any exposure to the transportation modeling software like TransCAD or TransModeler?

A: I am not in the Transportation concentration, but I have several friends that are. The best answer to your question is yes, all of the above. The Transportation concentration has a focus on methods of modeling and analyzing transportation systems. Professor Reyerson teaches many of the methods courses, while Professor Guerra teaches classes oriented around case studies. You will learn how to use a range of software programs, including R and Visum.

Hopefully in this chat, we can answer questions that you would have had answered if you had been able to attend our Open House.

Q: One of Penn's appealing aspects is the interdisciplinary design of the university. How common is it to take coursework outside of PennDesign?

A: It is common and encouraged. The dean especially speaks often about how much work is being done across departments and other schools. Many students take classes especially in Wharton the business school, the Law school. I've taken classes in the anthropology department, history department, and the Graduate
Q: I would like to ask about the MEBD degree. It seems like there is a studio component to it. Would you say that you use your skills as a designer or is it fairly technical? Is it research based?

A: I would say that it is a balance of both. We do the preliminary research to then use our skills as designers to proceed. We just stay very connected to the technical aspects of designing too.

Q: It really depends how you’d like to focus your time. There certainly are opportunities to add research outside of the core classes with professors and the like.

Q: According to the annual cost for the 2015-16, Room and Board fees are $7,644. Can you give me an idea how much will it be if I come with my wife? Also, is this fees are for the University dorm or neighborhood housing?

A: Labib, it shouldn't really cost much more. Of course, feeding two people as opposed to one will cost more, but not too substantially more.

Q: I'm going to be new to Philly! What neighborhoods do students usually live in?

A: There are several neighborhoods where graduate students live in some of the most popular ones are in West Philadelphia near the Spruce Hill neighborhood, which is just beyond 40th Street. Other students live in Graduate Hospital in center city which is east of school. Some live further downtown in Center City. You could even live in South Philadelphia or the suburbs if you really wanted to because transportation is not that bad, Philadelphia is biking friendly.

A: Hi... Students generally stay in West Philadelphia or Center City (off-campus) or Sansom (on-campus).

Q: Another question, what is the process of getting involved with faculty research like? Is it very competitive or is it largely available if you have some skills that are desired by a research project?

A: City planning faculty hires research assistants every semester. I know a few who have worked for Professors Reyerson and Guerra, specifically, on airport planning, self-driving cars, and other transportation topics.

A: Also, dual degree paths, such as what I'm doing with MSHP &MEBD, offer really interesting and interdisciplinary research opportunities along the way.

Q: Hello, I wanted to know about the PPD program. Since it is focused a lot on contemporary design tools, Is it difficult to find a job after that? Its is also not NAAB accredited. So?

A: Hi.. I don't think it is difficult to find a job after the PPD program. But if you are
interested in more detailed statistics, you may check out our Career Services page. http://www.vpul.upenn.edu/careerservices/reports.php#grad. Also, PPD is post professional that usually means we have a professional degree before that. Hence NAAB accreditation is not necessary as that is usually for giving validation to a professional degree program.

A: I don't think it would be difficult to find a job after your PPD program, I know many of my friends are able to find a job very fast directly after their graduation.

Q: But for this particular program? Do you know anyone? Or if you could connect me to them?

A: Unfortunately, we don't have a representative from the PPD program here at the moment. We would recommend contacting the Director of the program, Ali Rahim at alir@design.upenn.edu for more detailed information about what is possible after graduating with the degree.

Q: Are those easy neighborhoods to walk/ take transportation to campus? I don't have a car and am weary about buying one right before school.

A: You do not need a car for living in Philly. Public transit is easy and offers monthly or semester passes. Biking is also recommended for recreation and practical purposes.

A: Also Philadelphia is a very walkable city. Many students live just over the bridge in Center City or less than a mile away in West Philly. We also have bus loops and walking escorts at night.

A: Depending where you live, cars can be a real headache with parking. I live in old city where street parking (which requires Pennsylvania ID) is almost impossible and the cheapest lots are 250$/mo.

Q: Can someone associated with the MCRP program speak to student involvement in and passion for social justice initiatives? There was almost no discussion of projects involving community outreach or a passion for social change when I was at the Open House, which I found unsettling.

A: There was a panel about Penn and the communities that spoke about 4-5 social impact project Penn has going on right now through PennPraxis. Also there are so many ways that Penn is engaged in the community. Almost one studio in every department per semester studies and works with local neighborhoods.

A: There is a growing body of students interested in social justice, most of who are in the Community and Economic Development (CED) concentration. This year, they reinvigorated the Planners Network chapter here and have hosted several events, and they are presently organizing community engagement training. There are also several opportunities to complete projects in the community; for example, a group of students spent two days a couple of weekends ago rebuilding portions of a home for a low-income family in West
Philly. While social justice is not a focus of the planning curriculum here, CED is a growing concentration, and I imagine that students with passion will continue to develop such opportunities for beyond the classroom.

Q: Thank you. I want to know, as a MS student, will I be able to take classes from Landscape department?

A: As to the elective courses, I think you are free to choose any courses that interest you. As to Studio, every semester, we have several studios that allow students from other department to take, but it depends on the instructor.

Q: Is there much time in general outside of studio for other activities, like for fun, or even for part time employment?

A: It really depends on the program. We've heard that first year architecture students do not have much extra time outside of coursework, especially for part time employment. However, programs like City Planning do have room for extra/personal activities.

A: Many students have part-time jobs while they are in school, particularly after a summer internship. Students typically have time work in these positions 10-15 hours a week.

A: You should be able to hold down a part-time job. Fine Arts also offer TAships to all their students who wish to pursue this option.

Q: I have been placed in the waiting list of the MS Program. I have applied for Aga Khan Int. Scholarship Program here and they have scheduled their interview in around 21st April. I will need to show admission offer from the university during interview. As you see I have pressing deadlines. Can you tell me, if anybody admitted from waiting list, how long will it take to know after April 15? I am eagerly waiting to hear back from my top choice school!

A: Hi Labib. Unfortunately we are unable to give you an estimate of how long it will take after April 15th. As you know, departments will not know until April 15th if they will select candidates from the waitlist, so results can vary. If anything should change, you will be notified right away.

A: You might want to follow up with the Chair of the program, Professor David Leatherbarrow. You can reach him at leatherb@design.upenn.edu.

Q: What type of connection do current students have with alumni?

A: There is a PennDesign Alumni Association that is a formal group connected by the school. But several departments also have informal networks too. Many students who are employed nearby after graduation maintain the friendships they foster while in school at Penn. Others are able to make connections and get
jobs after graduation because of the Penn connection. Overall I’d say it is a strong community that likes to look back to help out current Penn students.

A: Sometimes you also get to know your alumni from career connection day, when some Penn graduates would come back as representative of their firm.

A: Also a lot of the TAs/GAs are former graduates that keep ties with both the school and their respective firms.

Q: How often do graduates end up in the Midwest or on the West Coast? I'd imagine that connections are strongest on the east coast but are there resources for reaching out to alumni in the rest of the country as well?

A: The PennDesign Alumni Association actually has groups in many cities across the US, called Regional Chapters. Check out their website here: https://www.design.upenn.edu/alumni/association.

A: I would add that City Planning graduates go pretty far afield. There is a strong PennPlanning presence in places like San Francisco, Chicago, LA, and Seattle. I will be working in San Francisco this summer, and this spring I am attending the APA conference in Seattle, where there will be a PennPlanning alumni reception. I personally know graduates who have gotten jobs in other "non-traditional" locations such as Louisville, Colorado and Birmingham, Alabama.

Q: Is there any time for part time job after regular curriculum works for an MS Student?

A: You should be able to work part-time. Are you an international student?

A: Yes, an international student? Am I eligible for jobs outside campus?

A: I think if you want a job outside campus, you need to have a CPT I20, but if you work on campus, it would be totally fine.

A: Hi... International students may only work on campus, i.e. they must be on Penn payroll. So that may be any department throughout the university. But, we usually need to file or OPT or CPT to be able to work outside university campus.

A: Many international students get jobs on campus in the libraries (there are several!), in the computer labs, etc.

Q: So there is no chance to be admitted before April 15th? Because I heard there is someone admitted at April 10th last year.

A: We may admit a few students from the wait list every few weeks until the class is full. This could take several months. We normally don’t close the wait list until beginning of July.

A: I was originally waitlisted and I didn't get my official acceptance letter until early May.
Q: How many credit hours do the MS Historic Preservation consist of and how many hours of teaching is it typically per week?

A: It is 19 hours. The way that is broken down is 5 the first semester, 5 in the spring, 1 over the summer, 4 in the fall second year, 4 in the spring the second year. The seminar classes are about 3 hours a week. So you will be in class about 15 hours a week most weeks your first and second semester. Over the summer the Praxis that you do is worth one credit and is very short only a few weeks so you spend most of your time in class or a learning environment.

A: During the second year you have 3 classes in the fall that would be about 3 hours each, and studio which is 8 hours a week at least. In the spring it really varies depending on what kind of classes you take.

A: Also if you are conservation concentration you will spend more time in the lab which would mean probably more hours in a traditional learning environment versus studio, seminar, or a class that is hands on.

Q: Is there any other available scholarship possibility rather than merit-based?

A: did you apply for need-based aid?

Q: I have got a scholarship but I am not sure if it is merit-based or not.

A: We recommend e-mail admissions@design.upenn.edu. That way, we can look up your record and talk more about your award after the webchat.

Q: How many credit hours does the MCRP consist of and how many hours of teaching is it typically per week?

A: You are required to take 19 courses (15 within the City Planning department). Your first, second and third semesters, you will take 5 courses; the fourth semester you only need to take 4. 1 course units translates into about 3 hours of class time per week, so you will spend about 15 hours per week in class.

Q: Also about working on campus, what would be the minimum salary per hour and how many hours could an international student’s work?

A: it depends on the job but normally probably around $8 to 10 per hour.

A: All full time students can work a maximum of 20 hours a week

Q: Why there is no MUSA student on "Meet a Student" page?

A: We did have a MUSA student but she graduated during the fall semester! You can always contact the Director of the program Amy Hillier at ahillier@design.upenn.edu.

A: Feel free to contact the City Planning office - cityplan@design.upenn.edu. Rosynne at the front desk may be able to get you in touch with current MUSA
student.

Q: Also, what are your impressions of the "Penn" name in the planning community? Its status as an Ivy League obviously does certainly add value to having graduated from such a program; do you guys feel that it puts you guys at a competitive edge in your job search? And do you feel comfortable coming out of this program with hefty loans?

A: My sense -- and I can only speak from personal experience -- is that Penn Planning is very well respected in the profession, but not necessarily because it is an Ivy League school. I came here because I felt that this is the program through which I could get the best education that matched my professional goals. However, I do not think that graduating from Penn necessarily provides a "competitive advantage" when we apply or jobs. The amount of debt that I will graduate with did not heavily influence my decision to come to Penn -- so to answer your question, yes I was, and continue to be, comfortable with the amount of debt I incurred to earn my education at Penn.

A: In talking with many people in professional fields ranging from architecture, planning, conservation, and engineering it is the general understanding that Penn is certainly a name to recognize in the professional world irrespective of the particular program. Regarding loans, I do feel comfortable coming away with some debt but I also feel comfortable knowing that the education here will certainly help secure a good job to begin paying that off.

A: Given the professionals we bring into Penn to teach the various departments I believe our name certainly resonates with a high quality of student. Most of the graduates I talk to recently have all comfortably found employment in the States and abroad and the studio lecturers also continue to do well and hire many Penn grads. New York is a bit harder to gauge because of the high cost of living but generally, recent grads have been doing well.

Q: how can we apply for those on campus jobs?

A: We have a student employment website that has a very comprehensive job search feature! Keep in mind; most positions for next academic year won't be posted until August. http://www.sfs.upenn.edu/seo/

Q: Is the chance of getting jobs or TA/RA get lower if I admitted later from the waiting list?

A: No it shouldn’t affect your chances of getting a TAship.

A: People usually get job as TA or RA after their first semester/year here.

A: Generally yes, you would be considered for a TAship either in your second (spring) semester or else in the summer (RA position).

Folks, we have 10 more minutes. Please send us any questions you still might
have before we wrap up this session.

Q: Are there opportunities to travel abroad while in the program?

A: Yes tons. Trips in the past year for HSP have included Savannah, San Francisco, Chicago, Beijing, Xi’in, Turkey, Israel, Jordan, Brazil, Rome, and others. This summer there is a group headed to the Middle East, the mid-west, and Paris.

A: The MFA program has a thesis show somewhere else besides Philly...Vienna, Berlin, and other places.

Q: Can students apply for dual degrees after the first year’s study? Such as March or MFA?

A: Yes, you can apply for the second degree after you get here.

A: A significant number of students don’t even decide to go dual until after they start. The course track changes slightly if you decide to pursue it after the first year but it is very possible to apply for dual degree opportunities and the process is pretty much the same.

Q: I am looking for housing off campus preferably with a roommate. Where do I start?

A: In my year a lot of roommates found each other using the FB page for the ARCH students, if you want to take it semester by semester until you know where in Philly you want to stay longer you can try Pennlets for short term leasing.

A: It was especially hard for me to find places to live since I was stuck working in Miami but the leasing companies I contacted in University City were incredibly helpful and informative.

If you have questions you didn’t get to ask, we are having another webchat tonight at 6pm EDT time! You can also e-mail us your questions to admissions@design.upenn.edu.

Q: Thanks for the info! I have been looking for this Facebook page but can’t find it. Does anyone have a link?

A: We will set up the FB group AFTER April 15, and probably closer to the end of the month.

A: this is the PennDesign Collective page https://www.facebook.com/groups/456693524451734/, in my year there was a group for our year specifically but this should work

Thanks all, we’re about to shut down. We’ll have another at 6 pm (EDT).