



Web Chat Transcript: November 6<sup>th</sup>, 2017.

Q: Coming from a design background, I want to know what to expect from the studio component of the city planning program (if any). Could you talk about your experience with this? Particularly for the community and economic development.

A: For CED you won't have a studio type course coming into your first semester, the first studio environment curriculum begins in the spring semester with Workshop. As a fellow student with a design background, you will be well geared to work with the students and I would even say you will have an advantage especially if you have experience in studios and digital experience. There is also another studio in the fall of your second year. In workshop, students work in groups of 6-8 students that comprise of each of the concentrations so everyone has a different background working together. Typically in the past the workshop course has focused on issues of equity and/or sustainability and works with local communities around the Philadelphia region. The second year studios are focused across the nation and international.

Q: Could you also talk about as students, organizations you are involved in? Equity, professional development etc.

A: In planning we have the student planning association which elects 3 reps each year and we host town halls and work with the local and state chapters of APA to host professional development events, socials, mentorships, and scholarship opportunities. PennDesign has a bunch of other organizations as well DiverseDesign, Penn Social Justice, QueerDesign, Women In Architecture, PennDesign Real Estate Club to name a few. Each Friday PennDesign student council hosts a happy hour for all the students of the school to socialize and network which is the best way to cap off the week! Also, planning specific, there is UrbTrans, the transportation planning student association, and also Land Use, the Land Use and Environmental Student Club. There are also many opportunities to collaborate with clubs across the university. There are innovation and design competitions, opportunities to consult to local organizations (PennPraxis and Community Consultants) and much more.

Q: Can you talk about the planning problems workshop? What project are students working on this semester and in the past?

A: The workshop is offered in the spring semester every year for first-year planning students. It's a plan-making workshop, so it gives students an opportunity to work in small groups (usually around 5-7 students) with a practicing professional to put together a plan for a city or neighborhood. Last year, students worked on either an equity or a sustainability plan for one of five cities near Philadelphia that have experienced financial disinvestment and population loss. I believe that this spring students will be preparing plans for neighborhoods in Philadelphia.

Q: How beneficial do you think it is to go to the open house on Monday? A couple of students in my program and I would love to make it out there but we have a Steel exam the next day and are just trying to make everything work!

A: I found the open house to be very beneficial when I was deciding on which grad school to attend. It is a very good opportunity to meet students and faculty and get exposure to all the resources PennDesign has to offer. That being said we do have an open house coming up in the spring for Admitted/Waitlisted students if you can't make it to the one this Monday.

Q: Could you tell us about how you evaluate and what you value in portfolios? I am specifically interested in applying to the MARCH program

A: The portfolio is actually the most important part of your application. The faculty admissions committee really want to see your ideas and thought processes.

Q: Could you tell us what the differences between MARCH is and MSD?

A: The MArch is a first professional degree. If you already hold a professional degree (either grad or undergrad), you would be eligible for the MSD.

Q: Can the current students speak to the culture of the Landscape Architecture department? How would you characterize the sense of community and the relationship between faculty and students?

A: Although I am not a MLA student, I have friends who are both MLA students or dual degree students, and they all speak very highly of the strong sense of community that exists among the landscape students; as well as the close relationship many students share with their instructors.

Q: What type of design problems are given in studios? Examples?

A: I am in the first year of MAR, and thus far we have completed two projects and started a third. Each project moves up in scale starting with a container for an ancient artifact, then using that container study for a pavilion study and finally taking the learned techniques into the third project which is an archive for the Penn Museum.

Q: Does anyone work here at the Advanced Research & Innovation Lab (ARI)? If so, what sort of research does it do and how do Masters students get involved?

A: Our ARI lab has just opened this semester so currently we only have a small group working in it. This year third year architecture students and some second year students have studio classes within the lab.

Q: On Monday's Open House will there be time to attend a class? If so what class?

A: there will be an open MCP studio for prospective students attend from 2-4 on Monday afternoon

Q: I have a similar question for MLA I: what topics are given in studios (first, second, and third years), and could you give us examples?

A: Each semester, the studios change is scale, ranging from the first studio which is a path design to large, international scale in the elective years. The first years gets you grounded in digital media and working with landscape medium through hand and digital representation on a path and a park. The second year jumps to large scales, working at the regional and urban scale. The final year depends on

your trajectory if you decided to do an independent study or take the elective studios which focus on specific topics, primarily of which are international.

Q: I'm coming from an architecture background, and am interested in pursuing MLA with MUSA concurrently; if you might have some additional input on the completion time-frame held by most students, how many pursue this, etc.?

A: The MLA+MUSA dual degree would be 3.5 years in length, assuming you apply and are admitted to the MLA First Professional Degree program. This specific dual degree program was just approved last year, so we only have a few students currently pursuing this option. But across the school dual degrees are quite popular, with at least 30 students pursuing dual degrees each year.

Q: I want to know what is the strongest and the most attractive part of the school and the program M.Arch 1, I mean which can identify Penn architecture school and differentiate with other schools.

A: I think there are many reasons why I would consider PennDesign an attractive architecture school. First off, there is a strong sense for design exploration and experimentation; as well as a diversity of pedagogy. I think this leads to very strong formal projects but also allows each student space to figure out what line of design thinking they want to pursue. Secondly, the faculty at PennDesign are some of the most-forward thinking PR actioners in their field, meaning students get firsthand experience with the people who are carrying the field of architecture forward. A third reason, I would consider Penn is the vast resources that exist on campus; this includes fabrication, research and robotics.

Q: Are there opportunities for advanced placement in the application, if applying with a B.S. Arch, considering it is a studio based curriculum?

A: Since you do not hold a professional degree, you would only be eligible for the 3-year First Professional MLA degree. However, if you find that some of the first year coursework would be repeat content from your B.S. in Architecture program, you would have the opportunity to waive those courses and replace them with electives.

Q: Are there interdisciplinary classes/ tracks/ certificate programs available? Specifically interested in Landscape Architecture/ urban design/ climate infrastructure

A: So there are several certificate degrees. I know there is one in Landscape Architecture, as well as in Urban Design, energy use, land use, product design, and I believe in historic preservation among others.

Q: What is the philosophy behind in Penn? Practical or conceptual or in between?

A: I think that PennDesign strikes a good balance of being both practical and conceptual. Most students are training to be design professionals, so it's important for us to gain technical skills. At the same time, courses ask students to engage with theoretical concepts in order to develop our own framework for practice.

Q: I'd like to know about opportunities for research that are offered to Arch students?

A: the Architecture department does offer research and ta-ship positions to second and third year students but generally they are not offered to first year students.

Q: I am interested in graphic design as a form of advertisement is this possible in the MFA program?

A: Unfortunately we do not offer Graphic Design. Our MFA program is studio-based, generally focusing on painting, printmaking, sculpture, photography, mixed media, animation, etc.

Q: I am interested in the GIS/Spatial Analysis certificate while pursuing the MCP degree. How would I go about it? Do any of the courses required for the certificate count towards the MCP degree?

A: You can get most of the course content through the Smart Cities concentration. If you'd like to formally peruse the GIS certificate you can do so as any concentration within the MCP degree, just make sure you apply in you first semesters to do so – you'll use your electives to fulfill the requirements for the certificate.

Q: Does Penn have Grasshopper class?

A: Grasshopper is taught in the Visual Studies sequence, and then there are elective courses that focus on specifically on Grasshopper.

Q: How does Penn define architecture?

A: I would start by saying that there isn't a specific definition that Penn uses to characterize architecture. Overall, there is diversity in faculty and theory that allow each student the ability to pursue things that they are most interested in. But to be more specific, I would say there is a strong focus on the theoretical discourse of architectural ideas, which generally takes precedent over the more technical aspects of design practice. As far the ideas being explored in studio courses, I think there is a healthy mix of people experimenting in the algorithmic based design approaches as well as people exploring post-digital design methods which focus predominantly on architectural representation.

Q: Understandably the 3-year MLA track would not likely change, however I've taken several Geospatial courses at the graduate level, and I'm wondering if there's room to waive certain courses in the MUSA track to expedite the dual degree process and shorten the program's total duration?

A: Since the dual degree program already shortens the two programs by one semester, there isn't really an opportunity to shorten it further without registering in a course overload, which is not recommended. However, you would be able to possibly waive from some of the GIS required courses and replace them with other courses

Q: Can the current students describe what made them personally choose UPenn over other schools? Also as a private institution it's much more expensive than other similar programs. Could you discuss funding opportunities (I do plan on attending the financial aid web chat)?

A: I chose Penn for a number of reasons. For one, I liked the sense of community at the school and how open the different departments and programs are to collaboration. I also liked how engaged faculty were with their students. The breadth and depth of courses also appealed to me, as well as the combination of theory and practice. I also really like Philadelphia and think that it's a great laboratory to study design.

I choose Penn mainly because of its amazing faculty and the exposure I'm getting in terms of the wide variety of projects and research topics the professors are working on. I also enjoy the environment that Penn provides, the resources and numerous electives it has.

I chose PennDesign for the Dual program. I liked the variety and overall uniqueness of the work I saw both departments producing and the wide range of working methods present. I felt the school would challenge my abilities in digital design and fabrication. As well I had PennDesign graduates as professors for my Landscape minor at the University of Florida and after speaking with them, having taken their classes, put the school towards the top of my list.

In regard to funding opportunities, you will get a very thorough overview of that at the Financial Aid Webinar, so I'm glad you plan to attend that session, as I will be presenting :) However, to answer your question now, you will be considered for departmental grants during the Faculty Admissions Review based on the entirety of your application (though the most important application material is your digital portfolio). These departmental grants can range from a few thousand dollars per year up to around \$25,000 per year, with a few larger scholarships awarded sometimes. These awards would be guaranteed to you for the duration of your program as long as you are enrolled full time and make good academic progress. Additionally, there are student worker opportunities, including teaching assistantships and research assistantships (usually offered in your second and third years) which are paid positions. Lastly, I always suggest that our applicants look for outside scholarship opportunities to help to finance their master's degrees. A great place to start is our Outside Scholarships webpage here: <https://www.design.upenn.edu/graduate-admissions/outside-scholarships>

Q: Would it be possible to take MFA classes as electives for the MARCH program?

A: Yes it is possible. The MArch program is relatively rigid in its content because it is an accredited degree and our students HAVE to take certain courses, but in your final semesters, you have more elective possibilities and you can take other courses including fine arts.

Q: I was thinking about pursuing both the MCP and the MUSA as a dual degree. In that sense I have a couple of questions. First, I was wondering if there were any current master's students pursuing this dual degree with whom I could speak. Second, how long would the dual degree take, is there a way to finish it in 2 years?

A: There is no one here at the chat who is doing the dual MCP/MUSA degree. You can email the City Planning Coordinator, Kate Daniel, at [katf@design.upenn.edu](mailto:katf@design.upenn.edu). She might be able to put you in touch with one of our dual students (we have a few). The program is 2 1/2 years long. Each one separately would add up to 3 years, so you can double-count one semester's worth of classes.

Q: Could you give a brief explanation of how the university reviews portfolios for acceptance?

A: The faculty review the portfolios first. They are looking for design ability and creativity. So you should showcase your BEST work.

Q: Regarding the application, should I apply to both programs separately? Or how should I proceed?

A: Yes, you will need to submit two separate applications. You will need to complete and submit one application before you can start the second application, but your second application will have all of your data input from the first application so it will be a much quicker process, and the second application will be free- no application fee after the first application.

Q: I am interesting in how to design building affect people's emotion because emotion and desire create people's life. What I could learn from Penn? I think architecture should take care not only what people

can do in it but also what people can feel. For now, I am lost because some professor suggest me to apply art school.....

A: It's nice to hear that you care so much about how the built environment affects people's day to day life and emotions. I think that's a very valid point and I would add that architecture is broad enough and as such is poised to deal with the nuances of individual life. Although Penn can't guarantee you'll find

Q: I'm interested in the value placed on the GRE for the M.Arch/MBA degree, I'm AA and feel my potential won't be recognized due to my races scores historically.

A: The architecture faculty rely primarily on the portfolio, while the GRE and GPA come in second. If you have a strong portfolio, the GREs won't matter so much. The MBA faculty on the other hand, would likely put much more emphasis on the GRE. But you should check with Wharton admissions to confirm.

Q: Could someone on the admissions team speak about application fee waivers for a moment?

A: We do offer application fee waivers in certain circumstances such as Peace Corp and AmeriCorps. We also offer application fee waivers for financial reasons in some cases but would need further documentation. In the past we have accepted a letter from the applicant's undergraduate financial aid office that states or shows the student has high financial need. Also, our dual degree applicants only pay for one application fee, not two.

Q: Could I apply only to the MCP and then decide to do the dual degree? Or would I need to apply to the dual degree from the start?

A: For that particular degree, I would recommend applying to both. Otherwise, it might take longer than 3 years to complete both degrees.

Q: Would the recommender's have to write another letter for a dual degree?

A: They would not need to write a separate letter for each degree, but they would need to submit a letter to each application. In other words, each application that you submit will prompt the recommender for a letter. Therefore, your recommenders could submit the same letter to each prompt.