



Webchat Transcript March 22, 2018

Q: I got the offer for PhD in architecture. I am so glad we have such opportunity to get connected with each other. I'd like to ask which year will we have the topic confirmation for PhD dissertation?

A: Unfortunately none of us have the answer to that one! You should contact Professor Leatherbarrow, he will be able to help you: leatherb@design.upenn.edu.

Q: How much does it usually cost to renting an apartment? Some places are near the university.

A: Most of our students live off-campus since it is more affordable than living on campus. You can find a place fairly easily for around \$700/month. It depends where you are living, and if you share the apartment or not. Center City is usually more expensive than West Philly, but also depends on the building facilities.

Q: If we qualify for work study, does Penn place us in a job or do we have to find it on our own?

A: You will need to find one on your own. There are a number of positions open in PennDesign and your Department can help you find a job. There are also positions open in the computer lab and the Fabrication Lab. Jobs are listed on Penn's Job Finder page. There are jobs listed as solely for work study students as well as regular jobs open to everyone.

Q: What are some of the best (pricing, proximity to campus, safety) areas/neighborhoods for us to live?

A: Here in Philadelphia there are many different options to choose from neighborhood-wise. And one great thing about our city is that in general Philadelphia is VERY affordable for housing as compared to other East Coast cities. Just like any urban area there are some areas that are better than others safety-wise. We have put together a "where should you live" map that you can find here: <https://www.design.upenn.edu/sites/default/files/files/Neighborhood%20Map.pdf> which I hope will help you!

West Philly is really close to campus, and also the neighborhood near Drexler University. Center City is in a walkable distance and a very good option (specially close to Rittenhouse or Filter Square). I live at Spruce and 41st and I feel safe there.

Q: Is the MCP course a STEM course that allows international students to work for an additional 24 months?

A: YES, it is STEM-designated.

Q: I also wanted to know from other MCP students why did they choose to come to Penn?

A1: Although I am not an MCP student (there are none in the chat today), I chose Penn for many reasons. First, the outstanding faculty; I was interested in working with some of them. Second, I was interested in digital fabrication and PennDesign was opening at that time the Robot Lab. Third, I was offered a grant that makes my studies affordable. Last but not least, Philadelphia is beautiful, cheaper than other cities like Boston, NY or Los Angeles, and I wanted to live in a big city. Finally, I also wanted to interact with other schools at the university.

A2: I joined Penn mainly because of its excellent faculty. We have professors here who are pioneers in their field. And we are also offered a wide range of electives in PennDesign that we can choose from. So I was able to pursue multiple interests during my short course.

Q: Could I ask questions regarding student visa application? I did a bit of research on student visa applications. I am a bit confused with it. It seems that I have two options to go, one is F1 and the other is J1. Which one should I apply?

A: Almost all of our students study on an F-1 visa. Usually J-1 visas are used in very specific cases, but there may be benefits to choosing the J-1 of which I am unaware, so I would suggest reaching out to Penn's International Student and Scholar Services (ISSS) office for assistance: iss@pobox.upenn.edu.

Q: I want to know more about courses in MSD : AAD.

A: You have many course options. It depend on what you are interested in. You have mandatory courses: three studios, Form and Algorithm (about coding), and Philosophy of Urban History (a theoretical course given by Manuel Delanda). Actually, I am taking courses related to digital fabrication, but you have options related to technical, aesthetics, theory and history of architecture, etc. Please feel free to contact me if you want more details: mrighi@design.upenn.edu

Q: It is said that it is possible for students to dual another programs within and beyond PennDesign. Can anyone provide more detailed information? Thank you!

A: Yes you can do dual tracks within PennDesign. I am not too sure about outside of PennDesign. The dual tracks are a little longer than a single track but I think it is worth it. I am currently enrolled in the Dual Degree program for architecture and landscape architecture. Please click here to read a bit more about our dual degrees: <https://www.design.upenn.edu/all-degrees-certificates/dual-degrees>. Also, for more detail about each specific dual degree, you can read more in the handbook from pages 25-38 here: <https://www.design.upenn.edu/all-degrees-certificates/dual-degrees>.

Q: What should I be doing to prepare myself for the MCP program? Any books or classes that would be helpful?

A: The Department of City Planning recommends the Planetizen recommended reading list - <https://www.planetizen.com/books/20>

Q: Are there TA sessions or study group for coding/programming for MUSA students? In general are there outside of class resources if you need assistance with learning a particular skill?

A: My understanding is that the MUSA students are a pretty tight-knit group that work on things together because the program is very small (about 10-20 students)

Q: I am wondering if there is a handbook to introduce PennDesign courses for PhD study, e.g. what kind of electives that I can enroll?

A: There is a PhD handbook here <https://www.design.upenn.edu/information/graduate-students> that you might find helpful. Because each PhD student is on a different track, I believe that you can pursue whichever electives you would like but you should definitely check with David Leatherbarrow on that one!

Q: Are there any kind of collaborative projects that MCP students can be a part of? And are there courses you can take which let you travel and study internationally?

A: There is usually at least one collaborative studio offered with MCP, MArch, and MLA students taking part that will travel to the site of the studio. A few years ago this studio was focused on Colombia. Also, I know that the student ULI competition often brings together students from across the disciplines to work on project proposals.

Q: I majored in GIScience during my undergraduate study and have already taken some courses that are similar with the ones provided there. Is there any possibility to waive that kind of courses and use that time to take other courses?

A: Once you get here you will be able to work with your academic advisor on those types of things. You are required to take 5 courses in GIS or spatial analysis but check with the Director, Ken Steif, to see what flexibility he would give you: kenneth.steif@gmail.com.

Q: I'm trying to find out regarding extra funds for the PhD, and how students with families pull it off financially with child care etc. I'm arriving from Israel where child care is less expensive than in the US.

A: As an international student, it is tough to find additional funding. I would suggest that you reach out to the Family Center at Penn for advice - they are a huge resource for students that are also parents on campus: <http://www.familycenter.upenn.edu/>. There is a Family Grant Program <http://www.familycenter.upenn.edu/grants.php> that might interest you.

Q: Can you help me with a general timeline after the decision? For instance when a MUSA student usually arrives at school and start to take courses?

A1: That will depend on where you will be joining us from - if you are an international student etc. Courses begin in the fall though.

A2: I arrived on August the 8 last year. I had a mandatory summer course and also i wanted to arrange my apartment since it had no furniture. If you are planning to rent an apartment directly here I would suggest arriving some days prior to your program start date.

A3: The City and Regional Planning Department offers some optional pre-term coursework in August to both the Master of City Planning and MUSA students, and that pre-term programming begins on August 6th. You can see more about the pre-term "boot camp" courses here: <https://www.design.upenn.edu/welcome-city-and-regional-planning-students>. If you are an international student who will be entering the US on an I-20, you would be able to enter the US

beginning on July 28th, because the official start of your program is August 28th (the first day of fall courses). If you choose to enroll in the MUSA program, we will send you more details on the immigration process. Just a note - different programs have different I-20 start dates. I just don't want to confuse any other international students that are here...

Q: I also am trying to find out when and how PhD students get matched with an advisor

A: Your best bet would be to contact Sarah Lam in the Architecture Department, sarahlam@design.upenn.edu.

Q: I got an offer from MSD-EBD program and my question is that which aspect does this program focus more on? The design process or the building techniques like acoustic or lighting system.

A: The EBD program focuses on building technology, energy modelling and daylighting primarily. However we also focus on lighting design and acoustics and lighting especially in our second semester when the course gets integrated with studio. We incorporate all the strategies in the first and second semester that we've learnt.

Don't forget, if you have more questions for our students, you can find their contact information here: <https://www.design.upenn.edu/graduate-admissions/get-know-us/> And you can always email us at admissions@design.upenn.edu. Thanks for joining us!