



Webchat Transcript March 26th, 2019

Q: I wonder if you can share the class size for MLA and MUSA programs

A: for the MLA classes, it depends on what year you are entering. If you are doing the 3 year program class size ranges from 25-35 people depending. If you are entering as a 2 year student the class sizes increase anywhere from 40-50 students. For MUSA, class sizes are around 15 people depending on the incoming students.

Q: So those numbers will be the total number of the incoming student's right? How many students are there for each studio?

A: The total incoming students for each class are also the studio sizes for your core studios. Everyone takes the core studios together. Depending on the size of the class, the studios have multiple instructors, so for instance in a 40 person class, there would be 4 instructors so each student is in a section and has one instructor they work directly with throughout the semester.

Q: How does advising work? Are you assigned an advisor? How often do you meet with them?

A: Every MCP student is assigned an advisor when they enter the program (they try to keep them related to the concentration you're in but this is not always the case). It is on the student to set times to meet with their advisors every semester, but nothing is required. You are also more than welcome to meet with other faculty who have not been assigned to you, or are even outside of the planning department.

Q: I am wondering about the studio size for MArch 1 and how is studio like?

A: An incoming architecture class can range from 60-70 students. They are then split into studios of roughly 12 students each. Each semester's studio will address 2-3 projects in various scales. Your first year will be very hands on requiring you to build a pavilion, design for the museum and neighborhoods in Philadelphia, and a student ideas competition.

Q: I am also wondering the length for the dual degree for MLA and MUSA, and if it is possible to finish one degree first and then do the other one

A: The dual MLA/MUSA generally adds a semester to your MLA program. Depending on whether you're in the 2 or 3-year program, it would be 2 1/2 or 3 1/2 years.

Q: How many MCP students on average help finance their degree with part-time employment?

A: Quite a lot of the students have some form of part time employment, whether that is through the university, work study, research or teaching assistantships, or part time employment in the city at planning agencies/firms. Most students find that about 8-10 hours a week of employment is possible with their schedules.

Q: Is the summer design studio required? Is there a possibility to only take the digital studios?

A: If your official letter of admission states that the summer design studio is required then yes, you will need to complete it. Unfortunately you cannot choose to only do certain studios.

Q: Do you guys have any remarks about living in Philadelphia? How different was it from you home city/country?

A: I personally like Philly a lot. It is very different from my hometown which is in canton, China. I have visited many cities in the US, and by far, Philly is definitely an ideal place to live. New York is definitely cool but personally speaking I would rather live in Philly. You don't have to buy a car if you live in Philly, which I think is great.

Q: Do you provide living accommodations on campus for the open house? If not do you have any suggestions of where to stay?

A: Unfortunately, we don't accommodations. But if you reach out to the Landscape Architecture department, they might have students who can put you up. Otherwise, Airbnb? Or a hotel. There's a list here: <http://cms.business-services.upenn.edu/pennttravel/preferred-vendors/hotels/local-accommodations.html>

Q: Does Penn offer on-campus housing designed for married graduate students?

A: Many of our graduate students tend to live off-campus, but here is a web page that lists all on campus housing: <http://cms.business-services.upenn.edu/pennttravel/preferred-vendors/hotels/local-accommodations.html> . Sansom place east mentions accommodations for married students

Q: As a foreign student, have you looked for a work opportunity?

A: Yes I have attended the career fair just a couple weeks ago. There were around 80 companies attending. Right now most of our classmates are looking for internships in the summer. After graduation we will look for jobs in the US.

Q: As an MCP student, do you travel for studios or classes often? Are they closer day trips etc.? Traveling can get pricy, so I would like to get your take on the added cost if any.

A: There are a lot of classes that will use Philly for site visits, but in the planning program the only classes that really tend to travel are the second year studios. For those transportation and accommodation should be covered by the department, everything else falls to the student.

Q: What would be the number of students in a class of MSD.EBD?

A: We have about 12 to 15 students in EBD.

Q: Where do students typically live off-campus?

A: I live in Chestnut Hall. Which is an apartment. Some people live in apartments and some in houses.

A: I live in West Philadelphia. It's very accessible to campus. I found it very affordable as well as having a lot of living options. I will say, it is further from downtown Philadelphia so it can feel a little more disconnected than other areas like Graduate Hospital or University City.

A: We have created this "Where should you live"? Map that breaks down the popularity of different neighborhoods nearby based on entertainment/ distance/night life/ walkability, etc. you can find it here: <https://www.design.upenn.edu/helpful-things-know>

Q: Do any of you have a car in Philly? I'm worried I might not need my Midwestern mode of transportation/ be a hassle to find parking...

A: I have a car. I pay to house it in a parking garage. I only use it about once or twice a week. It is useful for landscape site visits, volunteering, and trips to visit family. However you can certainly live in the city without a car as I also walk a lot and occasionally use the subway.

A: Only one person in my class have a car. She doesn't use it very often. Many people own bikes and motorbikes instead. Those are more convenient.

A: Parking is dependent on where you plan on living, west and south Philly are particularly easy to score spots without a permit. That being said, Philly is also very walkable, bike able, and easy to traverse by public transit! I get by just fine on a bike, but I know a fair number of students who also keep their car.

A: Our transit system is pretty good. I take the subway to work...:

Q: When do you all suggest looking for housing? ASAP or until the summer when people start to move out?

A: The general consensus seems to be June.

Q: I heard there are exchange opportunities in your third year (MARCH), what are those like?

A: There is a semester exchange program with the AA in London during your final year at Penn if you are pursuing a single degree track. I am not sure how this would work for a student following a dual degree track. I believe they take about 15 students. As to the course work I am not sure. I would write to the architecture office if you are interested in learning more specifically about the program syllabus.

Q: How effective is the career center, or similar office, at helping graduating MCP students with securing gainful employment?

A: The City Planning department is exceptional at sending emails upon emails with job opportunities. Additionally, both here at the design school and university wide have their own career services for graduate students which offer unbelievable skills building and networking opportunities.

Q: Would it be possible for an international student with a F1 visa, to have Work-Study eligibility?

A: The Federal Work-study program is only available to US citizens and permanent residents. But international (F1) students can still be student workers; the positions are just fewer. Our computer lab and fabrication lab hire international students.

Q: I am aware that first year MLA student can't do teaching assistant, what about MUSA students? And can we apply for research assistantship as first years?

A: I do believe that MUSA students can be research assistants but I'm not positive. Check with Ken Steif, ksteif@upenn.edu

Q: As students, are any of you involved in committees, student organizations? Do you find you have enough time outside of classes to become involved?

A: I am not a part of any specific school committees, aside from the ambassadors program, but I do volunteer with PAWS every Friday morning helping take care of cats that are up for adoption.

A: Most of the roles require some level of commitment but I find it has given me a more fruitful experience here, especially getting to know other students from other majors and years. I am in quite a few positions including a student planning association representative, PennDesign Student Council Landscape Architecture Student Representative, and the PennDesign Real Estate Club. I also TA and RA so you can make it work!

Q: Can first year students be a TA?

A: Generally not but please reach out to your department to verify.

Q: Does a TA/RA position come with a tuition waiver?

A: Generally these positions are paid with a small stipend.

Q: What is studio culture like? Do most students work in studio outside of class?

A: I have found that about half of my year works at home and half in studio. I find it useful to work in studio as you can get feedback from those around you and generate more ideas from discussions during breaks for campus walks, coffee runs, or game breaks.

A: In my experience, studio culture tends to be a very close knit. Many people work in studio, though I will say that is dependent on your class. Sometimes classes have been more known to work from home so there is not as much activity in the studio. It is very helpful to work in studio as all the MLA students from all years are on the same floor so if you ever need help or pass someone's desk you can get more insight if you've hit one of those late night creative blocks.

Q: Is there anyone I can contact regarding financial aid?

A: You can email us at fin-aid@design.upenn.edu

Q: I know this is highly subjective and hard to answer, but would you say generally that students in the MCP program develop a good camaraderie and enjoy their time in Philadelphia? Particularly out-of-state students

A: The City Planning students are known as the "partiers" of the school. They are the students with the most time! So you'll have fun, don't you worry

Q: Are international students eligible to take certificate courses?

A: It depends on your program. For the shorter programs, you really don't have enough time to also pursue a certificate.

Q: Are there any cultural activities adjacent to campus you'd recommend I make time for during my visit to Open House (neighborhood exploration, cuisine, recreation, etc.)?

A: There is the Philadelphia Museum of Art, the Barnes Foundation, and the Philadelphia Academy of Fine Arts. I have been to all three and they are all amazing

A: It kind of depends on what type of things you like doing- there is SO much to do around this area. Visitphilly.com is a pretty good guide to let you know what's going on each week/weekend in the area