



Webchat Transcript April 9th, 2019

Q: I am a prospective MCP student and have a general question regarding work study. Is this something best figured out before school, or is there a system to find work study once school starts?

A: After you receive your PennKey and password, that would give you access to the Student Employment Office's job search board where you can begin looking for work study positions across campus. Most jobs start to be posted in August through the start of the semester.

Q: Regarding the MCP transportation concentration. I am a bit worried if the resources and faculties for transportation is enough at Penn?

A: Unfortunately neither of us MCP folk here tonight are in the transportation concentration. But our faculty are pretty fabulous and many students get the opportunity to work with SEPTA and/or oTIS. I'm happy to put you in contact with a current transportation student if you'd like!

Q: Can you select courses at PennLaw as electives as well?

A: Yes you can take some electives at PennLaw

Q: Is it possible and/or reasonable to do work study and TA/RA?

A: Yes it is possible to hold both work study and TA/RA positions simultaneously. Personally, I've held TA and RA positions at the same time and found it manageable. It mostly a matter of time management and whether or not you can balance multiple positions with your studio/course workload.

Q: I was wondering how is parking on campus. Are there specific hours when you could park for free?

A: Street parking is free on Sundays. There are certain streets that are timed and metered (Most streets right on and near campus are this way) However, if you don't mind a 10-20 minute walk there is plenty of non-timed (you can park for however long you want, even weeks/months/etc.) and non-metered (Free) parking throughout west Philly (which is where campus is)

Q: I am a prospective MUSA student. May I ask questions as well? May I know if it is possible to take the real estate certificate program? How flexible can I take courses from outside the design school?

A: Unfortunately since the MUSA program is just a two-semester program, there is not time or room in your schedule for a certificate, especially the real estate certificate as it requires coursework that needs to be completed sequentially. You may have room in your schedule to take a real

Q: What are the architecture facilities available to M.Arch students?

A: In Meyerson Hall (the graduate architecture building) we have quite a bit of resources. On the fourth floor we have a full fabrication lab that consists of laser cutters, CNC Mills, wood and metal saws, powder printing and a booth for spray painting and casting materials. On the third floor are the computer labs that you are more than welcome to work in so long as there isn't a class being held at that time. You also have access to the Fisher Fine Arts Library where you also have access to the architectural archives here at Penn.

Q: It seems that TA/RA position only paid in hourly rate, and international students also could not do work-study. Is there other opportunities for int'l students to earn anymore? To cover the tuition fee?

A: Some positions are paid at an hourly rate and some are paid via a small stipend. I do not think it would be possible to have a job while studying that would cover the tuition cost, but student jobs can help off-set the cost

Q: For current MCP students, why did you choose Penn over other planning schools?

A: I will speak for myself and the reason I chose planning here at Penn was because they offer great dual degree programs and I wanted to pair my landscape architecture education with planning.

Q: What makes the MCP at PennDesign stand out compared to other competitive planning programs?

A: I think one of the major differences of the MCP program from others are that many of the courses, especially as you get further into your core concentration courses they become very skills building oriented. The curriculum provides clear, hands on projects grounded in reality that link to programs currently or proposed in practice.

Q: I'm wondering how common it is for planning students to get jobs in the Philadelphia area/east coast vs other parts of the country. I'm interested in the mcp/musa dual, but I would also like to work in the Midwest after the program

A: The city planning department is fantastic with job posting and internship placement. I will say a large majority of the jobs offered are from the Philadelphia/Northeast region, however there are a lot from all over the country. I have seen many job postings for the Midwest, though, especially Detroit/Chicago areas.

Q: I'm a prospective M.Arch student, and I know there is DigiBlast over the summer. Are the dates online updated for this upcoming summer? It mentions it is from July 29 - August 9.

A: Yes, the Digiblast dates are up to date. If you have questions about the program or dates and times I would recommend reaching out to the architecture office- arch@design.upenn.edu

Q: I was wondering for M.Arch students if there's an exchange semester and what are the exchange options?

A: Yes there exchange opportunities for M.Arch students. Specifically, in the fall semester of your third year you have the option to do an exchange studio at the Architectural Association in London with Homa Farjadi. During this semester all of your coursework will be at the AA. Additionally, there are options for elective travel course during the summer that are based in various cities, for example Paris

and Athens were options this summer.

Q: I am an admitted MUSA student. I wonder if I can apply for a dual degree now or later, which means I have not applied before in my application.

A: Unfortunately because MUSA is only a two semester program it will not be possible for you to apply for a second degree once you are here as a dual degree. However, once you are here you can most definitely apply to a second degree and if admitted start pursuing it directly after it just won't be a technical "Dual Degree".

Q: What types of work study jobs do most students receive? Do many receive jobs related to their study interest?

A: There is a wide variety and you are free to apply to any you're qualified for (not just in the school of design). If you want something low key things like library desk positions are a great fit, or else there is plenty of opportunity to do research with a professor or institution on campus.

A: There is a work board that lists Federal Work Study positions and students can select which they apply to. Certainly within the school of design there are positions in the fabrication lab and in the computer lab. There are also design related positions throughout campus that are not exactly architecture or landscape or city planning but still make use of the skills you learn in design school

Q: I am interested in Smart Cities concentration. Could any MCP student talk about how the courses and professors help build this relatively new area?

A: Unfortunately, no one here is from the smart cities concentration, but I would be happy to put you in touch with a current smart cities student if you have more specific questions about it!

Q: Are prep workshops required for MSDAAD students or is the August 23rd orientation the first day to attend?

A: Yes the digital workshop is required. It generally lasts for a week and it will cover the software that you might use in the studios that follow later on. You can find the exact dates and more information about the Advanced Digital Workshop on the Architecture admitted students page here:

<https://www.design.upenn.edu/welcome-architecture-students>

Q: Where are your favorite places to study on campus?

A: Definitely Fisher Fine Arts Library! If weathers nice, there are great public spaces on and off campus - especially the turtle pond. Van Pelt has a devoted study space for graduate students on the 5th floor as well as the graduate student center which has free coffee. Additionally, I like to go to education commons where you can book study rooms for a few hours at a time for private or group studying.

A: The Graduate Student Center is a nice place to study. They also serve free coffee and tea to graduate students. The Van Pelt Library has very nice group study rooms which are useful during competitions or group work. The Fisher Fine Arts library also has a nice reading room that gets a lot of sunlight in winter and is perfect for scanning books and writing papers

Q: Are there career fairs that take place at PennDesign? Do architecture students usually have internships over the summer in Philly or do they branch out to other cities?

A: Internships are pretty easy to find anywhere, not just here in Philadelphia. Most students prefer to work here for ease of not having to find new housing or subletting their apartments. A lot of internships come from our annual career fair held here at Penn where around 80 firms come and meet with students. We also have students that make connections to other locations outside of Philadelphia through their studio professors. There is also an "externship" program that Penn offers where you can take your winter and/or spring break to go and work at a firm, and many students get summer internship offers through there. Then of course, there's just web searches for internships in the cities that you are interested in, and many firms like to hire Penn students because of good reputation. To add to that, Penn also has a resource called Handshake where you can upload your portfolio and resume and it acts as a job platform with firms that Penn has as a list they are in contact with.

Q: Can any of the MCP students speak to how strong the program's sustainability and climate change resiliency studies compares to other planning programs?

A: The school just launched a certificate in Urban Resilience that might be of interest to you! <https://www.design.upenn.edu/all-degrees-certificates/urban-resilience> There are plenty of opportunities to bring such concepts into your own work and every year there are studio options that deal with climate change and resilience (this past year MCP studios dealt with such topics in Puerto Rico and Rhode Island). You are also encouraged to look outside of MCP classes if you find something of interest to you. I'd check out some of the work the McHarg Center is doing!

Q: Am I correct in remembering from the fall open house that concentrations won't be required per se anymore?

A: You can accept our offer without knowing your concentration, but once you begin classes you will need to choose a concentration. Within your first year you can change your concentration if you would like. So, choosing a concentration is required but there is some wiggle room on when it needs to be done by

Q: Is there any options for exchange in other countries?

A: Unfortunately, the only formal exchange program is in London. That said there are various opportunities for travel that will come around during your studies. For example, third year studios travel to locations across the globe. Recently, our studios have gone to Greece, Turkey, Columbia, Sri Lanka, Tokyo, Switzerland, Iceland, and Newfoundland.

Q: Are there international studio opportunities for MCP students and would you say, Penn does a good job blending domestic and international planning issues?

A: There are definitely international studio options in planning. Typically two-three of the studios are international for your final year of study. If you are in the urban design concentration, the public realm studio requirement is also usually international as well. From my experience I would say, yes, many of the courses try to balance planning precedence across the world. A lot more of the specific policy and programs used in planning are driven more by things happening here in the U.S. but they do encourage

research and study of other countries approaches to planning and planning related issues.

Q: Are externships found on your own like internships, or is this a specific program offered?

A: The Architecture externship program is coordinated by the school. There is a specific list of participating firms who accept 1-2 students for a set period of time. However this shouldn't stop you if you want to pursue an externship or shadowing opportunity on your own.

Q: Are there MCP externships?

A: No, currently there are not externships offered for MCP students.

Q: A question about student life: how is the safety around the campus?

A: UPenn does a very good job of having 'Penn security' officers everywhere. Really, they are just about on every block. Penn also has a walk-safe program where you can call to request to be walked home. In addition to PennSecurity there is also PennPolice and University police which all have a strong presence in the neighborhood. With all that said, I would say that it is quite safe near and around campus, however, just like any city, there are areas that are not as safe. Personally speaking, I lived in a 'not so safe' part of west philly for 10 years and never had any problems, but there is no hiding that crime does happen from time to time.

Q: As I review the program, students are not required to finish a thesis before graduation, is it correct?

A: That is correct. As an MCP student you are required to complete a second year studio OR a thesis. The option is up to you

Q: I was wondering what the common area are for student housing. And what are the rent rate?

A: Most of our students live off-campus in the area surrounding campus - some specific neighborhoods include University city, Powelton village, cedar park, graduate hospital, and Rittenhouse. You can see more about neighborhoods and housing here: <https://www.design.upenn.edu/helpful-things-know> rent will vary depending on a lot of factors, such as location and if you choose to have your own apartment or share a house or apartment. We estimate about \$700 a month on rent.

Q: When does the official letter reach the correspondence address? When do we need to submit official mark sheets from university?

A: We do not send out letters through postal mail at this point - the decision letter in ApplyWeb is your official decision letter. You should send your official final transcript or updated course-by-course evaluation to us by the start of fall courses. We will be sending email reminders about submitting final degree documentation over the summer

Q: So if you choose to do a thesis your second year as an MCP student, does that mean you may not have the opportunity to take a studio at all during the 2 years? What is the difference between workshop and studio at Penn?

A: Typically if you choose to do a thesis, you wouldn't also do a studio, however it is possible. It's usually not encouraged because of the added workload and credit load. Workshop is the prerequisite for studio so it prepares you for the skills necessary for a full on studio. You work in specific neighborhoods local to the area and with a group of your peers from all of the concentrations, starting from existing conditions analysis, formulate alternative scenarios for the neighborhood, and culminate the work in a final proposed plan. Studio in most regards is more specifically engaged with a theme and topic, whereas workshop you are evaluating all things planning related

Q: I was wondering if the travel programs happen during the summer or during the semester.

A: The official travel programs take place every summer immediately following the Spring semester, while studio travel week takes place during the Fall and Spring semester.

Q: I want to know whether school will give any help to our work after graduate. Is there any recommendation or cooperation to help us find jobs after school?

A: The school does assist with job search. We offer a career fair each year in the spring term and we have a career services office and dedicated staff member here at Design focusing on professional development. I would say that the faculty also assist with contacts that they have in the field.

Q: I would like to hear the current MCP students' academic interest, for example, research questions, current projects, and also plans after graduation, etc. Thank you

A: As a dual degree student my interests intersect with both of my programs, connecting people and landscapes and the overall process in getting large scale public projects off the ground and providing space for all. With my time here, I have formed many other interests, including the work I have been doing in an independent study and analyzing the rural-urban divide and its spatial ramifications. I still have a year to go so I am not necessarily looking quite yet, but I do have ambitions to teach and work at a firm with intentions to work on large scale/regional projects/plans.

Q: When can we start applying for TA/RA positions?

A: If you are interested in a TA or RA position, I would suggest reaching out to Bill Braham, the Program Director for MSD-EBD, now to express interest and ask him about the application process for TA/RA.

Q: I would like to hear the current MCP students' academic interest, for example, research questions, current projects, and also plans after graduation, etc.:

A: I'm studying both Historic Preservation (cultural landscapes focus) and City Planning (Community Economic Development concentration); a lot of my work at Penn has revolved around raising intangible heritage (social, cultural connections and practices – think place-keeping) to the same level of importance as tangible (build structures), and using our relationship with the environment to further this. More recently I've begun to dive into how we design and plan in the face of extreme climate change.

Q: So the studio travel would last a week and happen during the breaks within the semester?

A: Yes that is correct. Travel week during fall semester takes place during Fall Break, while travel week during spring semester takes place during the beginning of the semester. Spring breaks follows a few weeks later, so they don't overlap

Q: Workshop is just one semester of the first year then?

A: Yes, workshop is just one semester - your spring semester of the first year.

Q: Is it possible to do a certificate program during the MSD:EBD course for international students?

A: Unfortunately EBD is too specific and too short of a program to accommodate pursuing a certificate

Q: I am interested in the capstone project course, is it like an internship

A: My understanding is that the capstone project is practicum course. My understanding is that it is bringing together all of the skills you have learned in the program into one project. But I would suggest speaking with Ken Steif, the program director, about it more

Q: Is health care included in the school fees?

A: Yes. You can see a list of tuition, fees and estimated costs here: <https://www.design.upenn.edu/graduate-admissions/tuition-and-financial-aid> so you will see that the health insurance fees are part of the overall budget

Q: Is it possible to take more credits per semester than 5? More electives?

A: Yes, but you would need approval from the program director and you would be charged for additional tuition for the course.

Q: Is there any mentorship going on at Penn?

A: As far as mentorship programs, there aren't any one that are specific, but you can most definitely reach out to faculty members that resemble your interests, they have office hours where you can discuss any questions or concerns. We have a few student organizations that have opportunities for mentorships such as Women in Architecture (you don't have to be an M.Arch to join) and they will match you up with one.

Q: To the planning students on here, how did you choose Penn Planning? What makes it stand out?

A: Both Katie and I tacked on planning to our other degrees when we came to Penn so we didn't evaluate other planning programs, but we would be happy to get you in touch with a few folks who weighed their decision against other schools!

Q: Will PennDesign officials/faculty/students be part of Forerunner India program?

A: I am honestly not sure! I would suggest reaching out to ISSS (iss@pobox.upenn.edu) to inquire, I believe they should know which schools are participating in the Forerunner events.

Q: How difficult is it to find an on-campus job or research assistantship (are there many projects like that?).

A: There are many options for on-campus jobs and research assistantships. For on campus jobs you can search and apply through the university jobs portal here: https://www.sfs.upenn.edu/seo/job_search/ if you are interested in research assistantships I would suggest reaching out to the specific faculty member you are interested in working with and seeing if they need assistance.

Q: What are the pre-requisites to apply for dual degree in MLA?

A: Currently there is not a dual degree set up between EBD and MLA, however, there is a chance you could make it happen but would need to talk to the director of each program about it, but in general, you need to apply to each program separately, and then if admitted to both programs you can pursue the dual degree

Q: I have a 2017 version of career plans survey report. I wonder if there is an updated version of it.

A: It looks like the career survey report for 2018 was just recently posted! Please see here: <https://www.vpul.upenn.edu/careerservices/surveys.php#GradStudent>

Q: Is it possible to apply in different department within PennDesign for RA/TA ship during the course?

A: Unfortunately no

Q: What are the major firms MCP graduates tend to be hired at?

A: I would say there are not any big hitters that come to mind as the students are pursuing different interests. It depends on where students want to work as well. They range from city offices, regional planning agencies, private firms in real estate/development, community organizations, to other governmental agencies and private planning and design offices.

Q: I am wondering who should we contact about visa questions as an international student?

A: Our office (admissions@design.upenn.edu) can answer general questions, but in general ISSS (International Student Scholar Services) iss@pobox.upenn.edu

Q: I was wondering if Penn students don't usually find internships in Philadelphia, what are the cities are most common for M.Arch internship? Are they all in the US?

A: Architecture internship locations vary greatly outside of Philadelphia. We have students doing internships in New York, Boston, Paris, Texas, and many other places. It's all up to you and where you find your design interests

Q: I was wondering for M.Arch 1, do the students mostly have an undergraduate architecture degree or not?

A: I would say it skews 25% non-arch backgrounds to 75% arch background

A: There are quite a few students who don't have architecture backgrounds, but for the most part, students have some form of either architecture or design background

Q: Can international students apply for internships outside USA? For CPT

A: That would really depend on your individual visa and passport - I would suggest reaching out to ISSS at iss@design.upenn.edu

Q: I was wondering for master thesis in M.Arch, do we find a specific professor as a mentor?

A: Yes if you chose to do a thesis, you will have to approach a faculty member to serve as your mentor. Students generally chose advisors with whom they've worked with in the past, although it is possible to reach out to anyone you are interested in.

Q: I want to know where i can find the past students information in MUSA to have more specific chat with them.

A: I would suggest reaching out to Ken Steif, the MUSA program director, or the staff in the City & Regional Planning Department to ask to be put in touch with current MUSA students or alumni. You can reach them at cityplan@design.upenn.edu

Q: Do many students within the planning program do dual degrees? What is the ratio on that?

A: It's not uncommon, but the majority of MCP candidates are only pursuing one degree.

Q: What is the average age of MCP students, average years of work experience, and percentage of students coming straight from undergrad?

A: Unfortunately we don't have that data on hand tonight, but I can tell you that the MCP program has a good diversity of students coming straight out of undergrad, those that have worked for 1-3 years after undergrad, and then some people that have been out of school for more than 5 years. If you email us in Admissions at admissions@design.upenn.edu we can look into pulling that specific data for you.