SCHOOL OF DESIGN

As a diverse community of scholars and practitioners, the School is committed to advancing the public good—both locally and globally—through art, design, planning and preservation. With 3 research degrees, 9 professional degrees and 14 certificate programs offered, PennDesign graduate programs are consistently ranked among the top 10 in the nation, and serve as a platform for groundbreaking research as well as community engagement.

Learn more about our school leadership and the PennDesign student experience: https://www.design.upenn.edu/about.

Mission

PennDesign prepares students to address complex sociocultural and environmental issues through thoughtful inquiry, creative expression, and innovation. As a diverse community of scholars and practitioners, we are committed to advancing the public good—both locally and globally—through art, design, planning, and preservation.

History

Although the School of Design dates its founding from 1890, architecture courses were first offered at the University of Pennsylvania in 1869, making Penn’s architecture program the second oldest in the United States. In 1921, the Department of Architecture joined with the Department of Music and Fine Arts to create an independent undergraduate School of Fine Arts modeled on the French École des Beaux Arts. In 1958, the School was renamed the Graduate School of Fine Arts, reflecting the shift to graduate degree offerings in architecture, city and regional planning, landscape architecture and fine arts. In the 1980s, a program in historic preservation was added. To more accurately capture the School’s sphere of influence, it was renamed the School of Design in 2003. Today, with a standing faculty of 43, approximately 160 lecturers and associate faculty, and more than 700 students, the School prepares students to address complex socio cultural and environmental issues through thoughtful inquiry, creative expression and innovation.