

## **What are the best things about attending the University of Pennsylvania School of Dental Medicine?**

You'll hear it thrown around a lot on the interview days at different programs, but I think it rings especially true about PDM – community. The admissions staff does a great job of picking a unique and well-rounded class. We have all different kinds of people in our class, each who possessing different interests, both career-wise as well as personality-wise. The class size is great in the sense that you know who everyone is by name, but you do not feel pressured to be part of a certain friend group, as there are many. During orientation, our leaders did a great job of making sure we all got to know each other, so our class loves hanging together after big exams. All-in-all, this is not a cutthroat environment. Everyone is truly there for one another and we share study resources and answer questions all the time. If one person finds out information from a professor or upperclassmen, they'll share it with everyone in the class, so it really evens the playing field for everyone to succeed. The upperclassmen are great as well, and very helpful when it comes to studying for tests and getting help in lab. We're all committed to helping each other get through this together.

Another great thing about PDM is the amount of opportunity you have. You can pursue almost anything you desire. Because the dental school is on the same campus as Penn undergrad and the other Penn graduate schools, you have the opportunity to venture out and connect with other groups on campus. You can do research at the medical school or at Wharton Business School, you can join a dance team or a singing club, and you can volunteer with any group on campus. There are also a number of dual-degree options offered. While it is extra work, it gives students an avenue to pursue what they're passionate about outside of dental school and helps them hone in on their career interests. That wouldn't be possible at a lot of other schools who lack certain opportunities because the dental schools aren't well connected with the rest of the campus.

Lastly, another positive is the location. Philadelphia is a great city – it's not as big as NYC or LA, but there's always something to do and explore. There are great bars, amazing restaurants, and there's an event going on every week. The public transportation is easy to figure out, and the dental school is located in an area where there are three other universities, so you always feel safe that there are other students around you (plus there is a wealth of study space).

## **What are the worst things about attending the University of Pennsylvania School of Dental Medicine?**

Penn Dental is a very academically rigorous school. The curriculum that we take is heavily med-based, so we learn a lot of extra information and have a lot of exams. On the flip-side, our lab here is pass-fail (which for some students takes the pressure off,

but other students feel like it allows them to slack). The med-based curriculum is beneficial to some as they can learn more about the body as a whole and systemic health. The systems based approach in second year also helps when you are studying for boards.

The way that lab is set-up at PDM can be frustrating at times. While pass/fail takes the pressure off grade-wise, the structure of what we are doing at any given time is a little overwhelming. They do ease you in with waxing so you can build hand skills, but the rest of lab once we got to drilling felt rushed. We have a drilling simulation lab to help make it easier in some ways. However, the structure of our lab courses is difficult in the sense that you have a project to hand in every week, and not a lot of time to complete it in class. Most people find themselves coming in after hours to complete projects. Because we also have an exam every week (which is not pass-fail), oftentimes students are forced to prioritize studying over lab (when both should be equally important). Also, the lectures we have associated with lab are good for an introduction, but once you get into the lab there is not that much instruction unless you specifically ask a faculty member for help. Lab TAs and tutors are available for those who need extra help.

### **What do students need to know/what do you wish you knew before attending the University of Pennsylvania School of Dental Medicine?**

While they truly do ease you in during the first semester (and you have a great time getting to know each other as a class), things definitely pick up during the semester. You have lab, exams, cadaver lab, rotations, and volunteering all going on. In the midst of everything, it's pretty easy to feel overwhelmed, so it's important to have a healthy outlet and take some time off for yourself. Also, do not be afraid of asking faculty/administrators for extra help when you're struggling. It may seem intimidating, but most of them are very accommodating. Penn is not here to weed out anyone who's not fit to be a dentist. The school truly does go above and beyond to get you the resources you need to be able to succeed and eventually graduate as a very competent dental professional.