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Penn
Master of Behavioral
and Decision Sciences

Learn the theory, apply the tools, and make a difference

Penn's Master of Behavioral and Decision Sciences (MBDS) program equips students with theoretical and practical tools to understand how individuals and groups make decisions, how to affect those decisions, and how social norms play a role in motivating and changing social behaviors. Led by world-renowned faculty, researchers, and practitioners, the MBDS program creates unique opportunities for students to engage with an exceptional advisory board, apply tools and knowledge in our annual Design Challenge, and pursue independent, cross-disciplinary research throughout Penn.

Meet our alumni:

"I loved learning tools and techniques to evaluate what people were saying and translate that into opportunities for the client. The [capstone] was a really exciting project. I never worked in the digital mental health space before. Having those opportunities to gain insight into different industries has helped me become a chameleon and learn to speak the languages of different clients."

Kathryn Ambroze, MBDS '22
Senior User Researcher, JPMorgan Chase & Co.

"When I was accepted into the MBDS, it was a meant-to-be moment. I felt like there was a link between me and the program. I could take the time to explore behavioral science in an academic setting. Some people love commercial spaces, some want to go into consulting, some people are really into research. I realized health and health outcomes are definitely what I'm interested in, personally and in my career."

Yuzhen (Valerie) Guo, MBDS '22
Behavioral Designer, Lirio, LLC

"One of the amazing things about Penn is that the faculty you work with are heavily involved in research—they're very much at the forefront of their field, so you can take part in a lot of research if you want to. Once I was done with the first project, there were other professors who needed help with different projects."
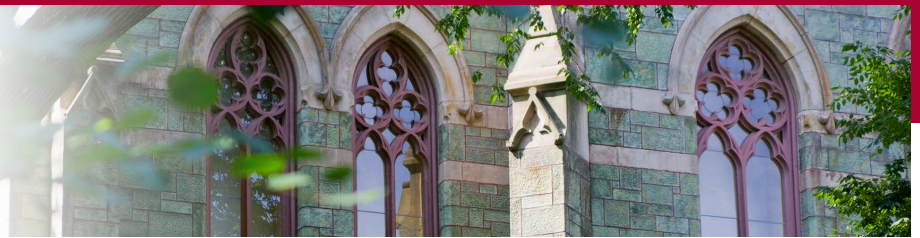
Max Spohn, MBDS '20
PhD candidate, Harvard Kennedy School of Government

Learn more about our engaged and well-connected alumni at

www.upenn.edu/mbds

Meet the Master of Behavioral and Decision Sciences program's founding director

Cristina Bicchieri

Founding Director, Master of Behavioral and Decision Sciences
S. J. Patterson Harvie Chair
Professor of Philosophy, Psychology and Legal Studies (Wharton)

"Wherever there is a human group there are social norms."

-Cristina Bicchieri

Cristina Bicchieri is a world authority on social norms and has consulted with UNICEF, the World Bank, the Gates Foundation, the United Kingdom's Department for International Development, and many other organizations. She is the founder of the Master of Behavioral and Decision Sciences program and the Center for Social Norms and Behavioral Dynamics, a major research center at Penn that aims to support positive behaviors on a global scale. Cristina is the author of over 100 articles and seven books.

Unparalleled connections, exceptional opportunities

A defining feature of the University of Pennsylvania's Master of Behavioral and Decision Sciences program (MBDS) is its network of outstanding industry and research partners who help bring students exceptional practical experiences.

Meet the MBDS Advisory Board:

Charlotte Blank
Director, Transformation & Analytics, Jaguar Land Rover North America

Claire Hobden
Specialist on Vulnerable Workers, Domestic Work, International Labour Organization

Jeff Kreisler
Head of Behavioral Science for JP Morgan Private Bank and Founding Editor of PeopleScience.com

Pavan Mamidi, PhD
Director of the Centre for Social and Behaviour Change (CSBC), Ashoka University

Namika Sagara, PhD
Co-Founder, Chief Behavioral Officer and Head of Consulting, Syntoniq

Neela Saldanha
Executive Director, Yale Research Initiative on Innovation and Scale (Y-RISE), Yale University

Carlos Scartascini
Head, Development Research Group, IDB Behavioral Economics Group

Greg Szwartz
Practice Lead – Healthcare Predictive Modeling, Deloitte Consulting

Piyush Tantia
Chief Innovation Officer, ideas42

Renos Vakis, PhD
Lead Economist, the Poverty and Equity Global Practice

Chiara Varazzani, PhD
Lead Behavioral Scientist, Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD - OCDE)

Scott Young
Principal Advisor, Head of Private Sector, the Behavioural Insights Team (BIT) North America

Allison Zelkowitz
Founder and Director, Center for Utilizing Behavioral Insights for Children (CUBIC) at Save the Children International

Learn more about our world-renowned faculty and researchers at:

www.upenn.edu/mbds

The MBDS Design Challenge

Every spring, the Master of Behavioral and Decision Sciences (MBDS) program organizes the Design Challenge, where our students partner with MBDS Industry Affiliates to apply cutting-edge knowledge from the fields of behavioral economics, decision sciences, network analysis, and public policy to solve real-life problems. We welcome world-leading clients in industries like health, wellness, sustainability, technology integration in marketing, and finance to collaborate with our students and provide guidance on solving the world's toughest challenges.

In the Design Challenge, MBDS students work to translate academic research, theoretical foundations, and applied frameworks into actionable insights toward a client-focused problem. At the end of the Challenge, students present their proposed solutions to the client's senior management and leadership.

The Design Challenge is an invaluable opportunity for our students to apply their MBDS education toward developing practical solutions while gaining real-world experience.

"Newristics has actually been a client for a couple of the Design Challenges. For many students who might be a little lighter on professional experience, the Design Challenge is a great way for them to talk about how they break down a challenge and use behavioral science to come up with a novel solution."

Michael Hayden II, MBDS '20
Consultant, MedTech & Applied Behavioral Insights

Learn more about how MBDS connects students and industry at:

www.upenn.edu/mbds

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