A student from China who attended Temple during his junior year, has recently been accepted to Harvard’s post-professional program of master in architecture – something he largely attributes to his Temple experience.

Albert Wang said he believes his experience at Temple was a crucial factor in making him stand out among other applicants.

“The courses I took at Temple gave me a lot of inspiration to organize my portfolio and made a strong impact in all of my studio projects when I returned to China,” he said. “I also want to appreciate [professors] Robert Trempe and Daryl Carrington – they are the kind of [people] who would like to give a helping hand in whatever little way they could. They opened a big door for me to see and learn when I studied at Temple, and provided strong recommendations to my application to Harvard.”

Wang was among the first students to participate in the exchange program launched in 2010 between Temple and Xiamen University in China. He arrived in Philadelphia in January 2011 as a student in the architecture department in Tyler School of Art.

“The whole semester at Temple is my biggest harvest in my college years,” Wang, 23, said. “It’s the best adventure I’ve ever had before.”

Wang said he saw his time in the United States an opportunity to learn about himself.

“You see the differences, similarities, and how they are perfectly linked or contrasted with each other, and you are amazed by how much are left untold about yourself, the things you take for granted, things that you never doubted but get you defined unconsciously,” Wang said. “I [had] a lot of epiphanies in the U.S., about who I am and what I need, instead of what I want.”

He also said he gained inspiration from his studio colleagues at Temple.

“The way they were unembarrassed by what they did not know and dared to be interesting, that’s completely different from the striving classmates at my university,” he said.

Before college, Wang said, he had a rather repressive life. He said he lacked confidence throughout high school and junior high. But, his Temple friends helped him realize he could do anything he set his mind to.

“I’m the skinny and short Asian wearing a poker face that you rarely pay attention to on campus,” Wang said. “Being that stereotype has cast an ironic sadness over my life whenever I have a reason to cheer up, but those bad feelings make me strongly sensitive to what can get me glowing, I’m intuitively delighted when I draw something, I am willing to spend hours reading diagrams and my dopamine level surges when I release the shutter of a camera – these are what I want to learn from and stay close to.”

Wang said he initially didn’t have Harvard on his list of potential graduate schools, but was
motivated to apply by one of his best friends in China.

“I questioned myself what I am afraid of and why certainty has become so important to my life,” Wang said. “That’s the moment I convinced myself to file my application.”

Wang will attend Harvard for three semesters: fall, spring and typically another fall. He said since all the students in the program have spent years studying in school or working as professionals, the courses that will be offered are electives. This means he will be able to determine what he wants to do, whether it be designing a building, planning a city or developing a thesis.

He said he might try to secure a job or an internship while he’s at Harvard, but is mainly seeking an opportunity to travel. Wang has his sights set on an internship in New York, his favorite city, for next summer.

Wang said he chose to do graduate school in the United States since he already knows the culture. Thus, he expects it to take little time to merge in and concentrate on his major studies.

“I just like the life in the U.S., and I decided to come back for being there, not merely for graduate school,” he said.

Wang will return to the United States in August to start his tenure at Harvard. Being one that hates making plans, Wang isn’t sure what is in store for his future. The only plan he has right now is saving enough money to buy a panoramic Hasselblad camera on eBay, he said.

Until August, you can find Wang working in his studio, at the gym or strolling around Xiamen taking photos with his new Minolta x700 film camera.