“Fair Mount In The City (FMC): The Park In The Cultural Landscape” was an interdisciplinary research project undertaken by VSBA and 14 graduate architecture, planning, and landscape architecture students at the University of Pennsylvania in 1982. The topic was selected by VSBA in light of a master planning study to be commissioned by the Fairmount Park Commission.

The primary purpose of “Studio FMC” was to explore the role of Fairmount Park in the Philadelphia’s culture in order to provide a basis for understanding the Park in preparation for subsequent master and community planning. The project focused upon particular aspects of the Park that were either too broad or too detailed to be analyzed in the master plan but were nevertheless important in formulating preservation goals.

The Park was considered in detail as an artistic heritage. Its rich variety of historical landscapes were documented and related to the cultural identity of Philadelphia. We also considered small-scale elements (common but very important) and unique places within the Park system of particular interest to individual students and others.

The scope of the subject matter encompassed the architectural and landscape character of the Park, its social character, ecology, management, maintenance and preservation, policy and economy, history, access patterns, linkages, uses and their changes, recreation, and special character. All of these were considered in relation to the overall Park system as well as its subsystems and sub-areas.