

**Candidate Name:**

**Samarth Setru, University of Pennsylvania School of Dental Medicine '25**

**How do you work with or lead a team?**

I was playing with two pediatric patients, a brother and sister, while volunteering at the University of Michigan children's hospital. The brother wanted to build Legos while the sister wanted to paint. The problem was that they both wanted all three of us to engage in the same activity. I came up with an idea that combined both Legos and painting. I suggested to the siblings to build something with Legos and paint something as the backdrop for the Lego structure. The kids took it to a competition—the brother built a soccer field with the stadium as the backdrop and the sister built a skyline with the night sky as the backdrop. This experience put me in a situation where I had to lead a team, resolve conflicts, and ultimately work towards a communal goal. I was able to identify the needs and interests of all parties involved and use my creativity to align everyone's visions. I think it is important for a leader to be a good listener, an effective communicator, and establish team goals to calibrate everyone to the same page. Also, it is crucial for members to shine their individual strengths and learn from each other. Accordingly, I incorporated the brother's experience in building Legos and the sister's painting talent and encouraged the two to work together. As a leader, I aim to provide value to my team by inspiring individuals to bring the best out of each other while working towards clear, communal goals.

**What leadership experiences have equipped you for the President/VP role?**

In undergrad at the University of Michigan, I was the President of a pre-health, professional fraternity and a chapter of a global healthcare nonprofit. I mastered how to manage teams, execute events, work towards a mission, and foster a family environment. During dental school, I have been very involved with all levels of ASDA's tripartite system. Locally, I served as the Co-Chair for Penn's Advocacy Committee. I learned how to increase member engagement and navigate working with school administration. At the district level, I was the Sponsorship Co-Chair and helped raise \$100,000 for District 3 programming. I discovered how to work with vendors and build mutually beneficial partnerships. Currently, I serve as the District 3 Trustee. Through this role, I sit on the ASDA Board of Trustees (BoT), Committee on Sessions that blueprints ASDA Annual Session, and the American Dental Political Action Committee (ADPAC). As a BoT member, I have gained insight into ASDA's historical context and decision-making process. My role in leading the District 3 Annual Meeting planning and on the Committee on Sessions has helped me realize what it takes to manage and plan large scale conferences. My involvement with ADPAC has prepared me to be the spokesperson for ASDA with external organizations like the ADA. Ultimately, I have acquired unique and diverse experiences at all three levels of ASDA, and I truly understand the association from multiple perspectives. I am extremely confident in my ability to serve as National President to move our association forward.

**What are 2-3 issues important to dental students and/or the position of President/VP?**

The average debt for a dental graduate is around \$300,000. This astounding cost often forces recent graduates to focus their efforts on recovering what they have expended as opposed to focusing on providing high quality and affordable care. If student debt was lowered, dentists could maximize their service to the community by spending some of their time working for free or taking reduced reimbursements. This would help patients who cannot afford standard dental care and do not have

dental coverage. As President, I will dedicate a significant proportion of our advocacy work to increasing federal and state funding for dental schools. Another significant issue for dental students is dealing with burnout and the stresses that come with a rigorous dental school curriculum. Not only does this jeopardize students' mental health, but it also compromises work ethic and potential for students to succeed. Burnout reduces excitement in learning and carrying out long-term cases in the clinic. This impedes upon the quality of training for dental students and ultimately the quality of care provided by dentists. ASDA does not stand for this—nor do I. As ASDA President, I will focus our association's wellness agenda on minimizing student burnout to better the dental student experience and subsequently the quality of new graduates in the United States.