

Canidate Name: John Russo

How do you work with or lead a team?

One of the major benefits I've received through my ASDA membership is extensive training in leadership development. I have always been drawn towards leadership positions as a form of service to others, and an opportunity for personal development. Over my term as chapter President, I have been humbled on multiple occasions, and been forced to continually revise my idea of what makes an individual a successful leader. Through my training, I have learned a great deal about different leadership styles, emotional intelligence, and communication. Although there is no single right way to lead a team, I have come to a handful of conclusions and guidelines that I try to implement in my own leadership. I believe one of the most important qualities for a leader is humility. The ability to admit fault without making excuses or assigning blame is something that can be incredibly difficult but creates respect and trust within a team. Another characteristic that I have worked at extensively is the ability and willingness to delegate. By delegating responsibility to teammates, a leader shows trust in the abilities of their team and frees up space to take on additional roles within the team. Finally, openness to feedback is a crucial component for leading a team. This has been exercised within my own chapter by sending out an anonymous feedback form to my committees and chairs to voice their concerns, and by encouraging my e-board to speak up any time they have suggestions for improvement.

What leadership experiences have equipped you for the District Trustee role?

I have been fortunate enough to have been elected to several leadership positions throughout my time in dental school, but the ones that are most pertinent to the Trustee position are my experience as the NSU ASDA Chapter President and the District 5 Advocacy Chair. Through these roles, I have had the privilege to sit on the D5 cabinet for the past two years, working alongside two excellent trustees, and learning from their successes. In my time as the D5 Advocacy Chair, I gained a much greater understanding for the importance of political activism in our profession and had the opportunity to see how the other chairs within the district implement their own initiatives. This role gave me greater insight into the structure of the cabinet as well as its role in the tripartite hierarchy of ASDA. The experience that I believe sets me apart in my preparation for the D5Trustee position is my current role as an ASDA chapter president. This responsibility has been more challenging and rewarding than I could have imagined and has opened my eyes to the unique circumstances that sets one chapter apart from the next. I have learned a tremendous amount regarding areas such as event planning, communication with administrators and vendors, managing and encouraging team members, running an efficient meeting, and managing a budget.

Why are you interested in the District Trustee role and what do you hope to accomplish in this position?

My decision to run for the District Trustee position has been the culmination of conversations had with our current trustee Brooke, my school administration, family, and a great deal of personal reflection. From a somewhat selfish perspective, the thought of no longer having a leadership position in the organization I have come to love over the last three years is daunting. Given the unique training and experiences I have received from ASDA over this time, I feel it is my responsibility to continue to give back and serve the organization. My goal for this position is to carry on the legacy that Victoria, Brooke, and their predecessors have created and maintained. What makes District 5 unique is not only our

tenacity for advancing the field of dentistry, but more importantly our kindness and ability to have fun while doing it. In terms of quantifiable goals, I hope to work with chapter presidents and school administrators to help more D5 schools transition to auto-enroll, having seen the benefits it has provided my chapter at NSU. I also hope to aid chapter leaders in fundraising and budgeting to send students to national ASDA events. This was a large push of my chapter presidency, and I believe attending national events is an invaluable aspect of ASDA membership. Finally, I hope to explore the option of pairing up with District 4 for our annual district conference, and to plan a conference that is as fun and educational as possible for our members!

What are 2-3 issues important to dental students?

Having had the privilege of serving as the D5Advocacy chair, I can think of far more than 2-3 issues that are important to dental students. There are a few that I believe are more important than ever. The first of these issues is student loan debt repayment. There's a wide range of personal circumstances surrounding student loan debt depending on familial contribution and cost of attendance, but the average dental student will graduate with debt. For students like myself, attending a private university, this debt can be over \$500,000 without considering any prior student loans. As the cost of attendance continues to rise, it's increasingly important that we educate our politicians on the extensive amount of schooling and large burden of debt students are assuming to be able to serve their communities. It's also paramount that students are educated in financial strategy that can be implemented in paying back loans, and options available for loan forgiveness through existing government programs. Another issue, highlighted beautifully in our recent District 5 conference, was the different options for employment following graduation. DSOs are taking a larger stake in the dental market, and this will only continue. While many new graduates will start their career with a DSO, most plan to spend the majority of their careers in private practice, with the hopes of eventual ownership. It's crucial that we provide students with the education and support to understand their options following graduation, and a path to practice ownership down the road.