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How do you work with or lead a team?

My philosophy on leadership centers on fostering trust and shared purpose within a team. Over the past few years, especially through my growth serving as District 9 Trustee and experience being the founding president for our chapter at KCU-Joplin, I've reinforced the idea that effective leadership is defined by how well you uplift the people around you.

Being part of a new school and watching our ASDA community develop from the ground up taught me the importance of delegation that is rooted in trust, empowering those who want to be involved and creating space for them to succeed. I have seen firsthand when people are given meaningful responsibility, they rise to it because they feel a genuine sense of ownership. To support this means developing a culture that fosters intrinsic motivation. At its foundation, leadership is about inspiring those to truly care from within. In my opinion, this is where leadership becomes the most sustainable and impactful.

My experiences over the last few years have also strengthened my belief that leadership must be rooted in humility. I've become more comfortable acknowledging where I fall short, asking for help, and seeking advice from both inside and outside ASDA. Humility as a leader also means being transparent and approachable, which creates an environment where team members feel valued and heard. When people understand that their voices matter, especially within this organization, it opens the door for genuine growth for both the individual and the students they serve.

What leadership experiences have equipped you for the role of President/Vice President?

Both of my major leadership roles of serving as District 9 Trustee and as the founding president of our inaugural chapter at KCU-Joplin, have equipped me with a unique set of experiences that directly prepare me for serving as president/vice president. Although these positions were very different in scope, they shared a common theme of leading in environments that were still taking shape.

Building a chapter and a newly restructured district required significant flexibility and the willingness to build culture from the ground up. In both roles, I reinforced my ability to navigate unfamiliar situations, adapt, and make informed decisions even without precedent. These experiences also pushed me to form relationships with chapters across the country, build trust with other leaders, and collaborate with partners who support our organization.

I feel that most importantly, these roles taught me how to unify people who come from different backgrounds, expectations, and levels of experience. With so many rapid and unprecedented changes reshaping dental education, students shouldn't have to navigate this

uncertainty alone. The ability to bring people together, and provide clarity and stability in the midst of change is imperative not only for the support of students, but for ensuring the continued success and strength of our organization.

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

1. Mental Health/Wellness

Mental health and wellness will always remain a core issue for dental students. The surrounding conversation cannot end at surface level solutions. In my Contour article published in March 2025, I wrote about how the loss of purpose is one of the strongest drivers of burnout in dental school. I believe that wellness must be reframed as a culture shift in the earliest stages of dental education.

Rather than providing reactionary measures, we need proactive systems that help students preserve purpose and psychological safety throughout their experience in dental school. Normalizing vulnerability and talking about uncomfortable topics prioritizes mental health and supports long term resilience which ultimately shapes the dental school experience and mitigates burnout before it begins.

2. Financial Stress/Loan Reform

Financial stress has become one of the most pressing barriers to student wellbeing. With rising tuition, restricting federal loan access, and increasing cost of living, students are navigating debt that shapes everything from entry to the profession, post-graduate plans, and even mental health. After July 2025, dental students will have significantly reduced access to federal loans, which significantly amplifies inequities for students.

This reality highlights the urgent need for loan reform advocacy and transparent financial education. Students deserve clear guidance on financial literacy, available repayment plans, but most importantly, students deserve a system where access to dental education isn't determined by personal financial background. ASDA must continue pushing for federal protections and realistic solutions that ensure the future of dentistry remains accessible and equitable.