

Anna Hedges, Iowa '27

How do you work with or lead a team?

When I work with or lead a team, I focus on clear communication, accountability, and making sure everyone feels valued and supported. As the current Iowa ASDA President and District 8 Secretary, I've learned that leadership isn't about telling people what to do, it's about helping the group work well together and move toward the same goals.

Communication is a big part of how I try to lead. I strive to be organized, transparent, and approachable, whether I'm working with my local board, district leadership, or chapter delegates. Setting expectations early and checking in regularly helps keep everyone stay on the same page and prevents small issues from becoming bigger problems, especially during those busy times of the semester.

I also believe that trust and accountability are essential for a strong team. I lead by staying prepared, meeting deadlines, and following through on commitments. When challenges come up, I focus on finding solutions and encouraging open discussion rather than placing blame. I want team members to feel comfortable sharing ideas or concerns, knowing their input is respected.

Working with a wide range of personalities and leadership styles has helped me become more flexible as a leader. This has been especially important in my role as District Secretary, where collaboration across multiple chapters requires strong organization and follow-through.

Overall, I see leadership as a way to serve others. My goal is to support my team, help individuals grow, and create a positive, productive environment where everyone feels motivated to contribute.

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

My experience serving on the current District 8 Cabinet as District Secretary has directly prepared me for the role of District Trustee. In this position, I have worked closely with our current District Trustee, Emily, on a variety of projects, including organizing the District Leadership Retreat and the District Conference to name a couple. Being involved in the planning and coordination of these events gave me a strong understanding of district operations, communication, and collaboration across multiple schools.

While I do not yet have firsthand experience with all that goes into the national side of the District Trustee role, working closely with Emily has provided valuable insight into what to expect. Having this behind-the-scenes exposure has helped me better understand the scope of the role, the time commitment, and the importance of serving as a bridge between the district and national leadership.

This experience has prepared me to step into the District Trustee role with realistic expectations, a strong foundation, and a willingness to learn, while continuing to advocate for and support District 8.

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

I am interested in the District Trustee role because I have greatly valued my time serving as the past District 8 Secretary and am eager to continue expanding my impact within the district. That role allowed me to work closely with district leadership, support chapter officers, and contribute to initiatives that strengthened communication and collaboration across schools. Through this experience, I have developed a clear understanding of district operations and the importance of strong, consistent representation.

With our schools merging into a new district last year, I am highly motivated to help build and sustain meaningful connections among all chapters. I am committed to ensuring that every school feels supported, informed, and included. As District Trustee, I would work intentionally to strengthen communication between chapters and national leadership, making sure information, resources, and opportunities are clearly communicated and accessible.

In this role, I hope to serve as a dependable advocate for students in our district by listening to concerns, representing their needs, and encouraging involvement at both the district and national levels. I also aim to support leadership development by helping chapter leaders feel confident, prepared, and connected to the larger ASDA community as a whole.

Overall, the District Trustee role represents a natural next step in my leadership journey. I am confident that my experience, organizational skills, and commitment to collaboration will allow me to effectively represent District 8 and contribute to the continued growth and success of our district.

What are 2-3 issues important to dental students?

One major issue important to dental students is student loan debt, especially in light of the recently passed "Big Beautiful Bill". With rising tuition costs and interest rates, many students are graduating with significant financial burdens that influence career decisions, practice choices, and overall well-being. Advocacy for fair repayment options, transparency, and long-term financial sustainability is critical for supporting future dentists.

Another important issue is access to care and the role dental students play in addressing oral health disparities. Many students are passionate about serving underserved communities, but barriers such as limited funding, restrictive regulations, and lack of support can make it

challenging in the real-world. Expanding community-based programs and advocating for policies that improve access to care, benefit both patients and the students' clinical education.

Finally, student well-being and mental health remain a growing concern. Dental education is demanding, and stress, burnout, and anxiety are common among students. Promoting resources, fostering supportive learning environments, and encouraging open conversations about mental health are essential to ensuring students can succeed both academically and personally.

Addressing these issues through advocacy and representation is vital to supporting dental students and strengthening the future of the profession. At Iowa, we have an embedded counselor that only works with dental students. During this past year, IASDA has worked more closely with him to provide more events and support groups what students requested and students have greatly benefited from these.