

Monique Kapur-Mauleon, Buffalo '27**How do you work with or lead a team?**

Clear, consistent communication is a cornerstone of my leadership style, as it ensures transparency, calibration, and accountability across all initiatives. I prioritize creating an environment where team members feel comfortable sharing ideas, asking questions, and collaborating with individuals they may not have previously worked with. This openness has allowed our chapter to collectively develop new initiatives and reassess existing policies to ensure they continue to serve our organization effectively.

Additionally, I always strive to lead by example and to conduct myself by the same standards of professionalism, reliability, and engagement that I'd expect from other members of the team. And as difficult of a lesson as it was for me to accept, I acknowledge that I am unable to personally take on all tasks that need to be completed by any given time, and I recognize that effective leadership means trusting team members with tasks that align with their strengths and interests.

Most importantly, I have learned that successful teams are dynamic and require adaptability. By setting clear goals and remaining flexible in response to ever-changing circumstances, I strive to guide teams toward shared objectives that advance both the organization and the individuals within it.

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

Over the years, I have participated in meetings at all levels of tripartite, where I've witnessed firsthand how dental professionals put aside differences to lend themselves to a larger cause. At Lobby Day, the "Tooth Party" unites its members in advocating for shared objectives that advance both our profession and the interests of our patients, demonstrating the significance of collective action which I'd facilitate as District 2 Trustee. And during my time as Buffalo chapter president, I've been heavily involved in the planning of our events and constantly receive feedback, experiences which have strengthened my understanding of students' priorities-insight I would apply at the district level.

In Buffalo, our ASDA chapter is uniquely structured and concurrently recognized as the Dental Student Association, UBSDM's student government. As ASDA Chapter President, I oversee an Executive Board of nearly forty students, while my role as Student Government President expands this responsibility to a Senate of over seventy, along with dozens of student organizations under the ASDA/DSA umbrella. This dual responsibility has necessitated strong organizational skills, effective communication across groups, and the ability to balance competing priorities while representing student interests at multiple levels. These skills are essential for successful service as a District Trustee. In these roles, I serve as a trusted voice for

my school's student body, a responsibility I approach with great care. As a District Trustee, this commitment would extend even further, allowing me to advocate for our schools, our district, and the dental profession as a whole.

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

To put it simply, I am immensely passionate about organized dentistry. I actually started to catch "ASDA fever" in high school, when I attended my first NYSDA House of Delegates meeting.

During COVID, I was able to see firsthand how much of an impact organized dentistry had on the safe reopening of offices in New York State, and I knew that I wanted to be a part of something like that one day. Since then, my involvement has provided me with an innumerable amount of treasured memories, from ASDA Fever Week events the very first day of dental school to the indescribable connections I've made along the way. As District Trustee, it would be my principal objective to provide these sorts of experiences to students across our district, as well as to empower them to become engaged advocates and future leaders.

I believe that through the unification of our collective voices, we can achieve tangible results that no one person could on their own. While intra-district cohesion and collaboration will always be paramount, I'd love to see increased interactions with other districts as well. There is so much to be learned from students in other areas, and while some of us are lucky enough to have had these crucial networking encounters at national meetings, not everyone from our schools have gotten this chance. As District 2 Trustee, I'd have the means to extend this valuable opportunity to even more students from our chapters, as well as those from other districts.

What are 2-3 issues important to dental students?

Arguably the most pressing issue for dental students is student debt. The ADA currently estimates that the total cost for a dental education, not even including undergrad, is around \$350,000-\$400,000, an increase of almost 125% over the prior decade. This burden is compounded in our state, one of only two where completion of at least a one-year general practice residency after dental school is the fastest pathway to obtain licensure, further delaying earning potential. With new legislation continually being introduced regarding student loans, including potential caps and changes to repayment programs, dental education is becoming increasingly less affordable. At the district level, we can support students through accessible financial planning resources, such as webinars and workshops on loan repayment options, budgeting, and navigating federal and state loan programs. Additionally, creating opportunities for students to engage with financial advisors and recent graduates can help demystify post-graduation finances.

A second issue is wellness- as we all know, dental school is *hard*. But as a result, our own wellness can be easy to neglect. And even though some of our schools are geographically distant from each other and our exact scholastic experiences vary, we are united by the shared challenges of dental education and the need for intentional support, balance, and community. Prioritizing and promoting self-care, in all its different manifestations, across our district is essential in ensuring that students not only succeed academically, but also remain resilient, engaged, and fulfilled throughout school and in practice.