

Ridge Flatness, Minnesota '29

How do you work with or lead a team?

I've learned how to work with and lead a team through the different environments I've been part of such as football, coaching, volunteering, research, and now dental school. Playing football in college taught me early that leadership isn't about trying to be the loudest voice; it's about being reliable, communicating clearly, and leading by example that you're committed. When teammates see you doing the work, staying level-headed, and holding yourself to a high standard, they naturally trust you and follow your lead.

Coaching younger athletes and working with Special Olympics showed me how important patience and support are. People perform better when they feel understood and encouraged, not judged. I've always tried to be the person who listens first, figures out what someone needs, and helps them get there. That translates into academic and professional settings too whether it's group projects, tutoring classmates, or research in the lab, I make sure the environment feels collaborative instead of competitive.

What drives my leadership style is service. I'd rather work alongside people, share the load, and help create a direction that everyone is invested in. I'm comfortable stepping up when needed, but I'm just as comfortable stepping back and letting others take over if that's what's best for the group.

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

My leadership experiences have prepared me well for the District Trustee role because they have consistently placed me in positions that require accountability, communication, and representing the voices of others. One of the most formative roles for me has been serving on the Student-Athlete Advisory Committee (SAAC) leadership council. In that role, I worked directly with administrators, coaches, and fellow student-athletes to advocate for concerns that affected the broader athletic community. I learned how to listen, take feedback from different groups, and communicate different perspectives clearly to decision-makers, skills that directly translate to representing chapters and students at the district and national ASDA level.

Attending the District 8 ASDA Conference was a turning point for me in understanding leadership at a broader level. Being surrounded by motivated student leaders from across the district showed me how impactful clear communication and collaboration can be when everyone is aligned toward shared goals. It gave me a better understanding of how district-level leadership supports individual chapters and how national initiatives translate into real opportunities for students. Seeing how trustees, council members, and chapter leaders interact reinforced my desire to serve in a role that connects students, chapters, and national ASDA.

I've also learned the value of relationship-building through collaboration with peers, faculty, and organizational leaders. My experiences have shaped me into someone who takes that responsibility seriously and is motivated to serve the district with integrity and follow-through.

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

I'm interested in the District Trustee role because it intertwines leadership, advocacy, and service, three things that have consistently motivated me throughout my experiences in undergraduate athletics and dental school. I'm drawn to positions where I can represent others, help connect people to resources, and contribute to something bigger than myself. The District Trustee role allows me to do exactly that at a district-wide level.

After attending the District 8 ASDA Conference, I gained a clearer picture of how impactful district leadership can be. Seeing how trustees support chapters and communicate national initiatives. I realized I want to be someone chapters can rely on, not just for information, but for support, guidance, and honest communication.

In this role, I hope to strengthen communication between national ASDA, the district, and individual chapters. I want chapter leaders to feel comfortable bringing forward concerns and confident that those concerns are being heard and addressed. I also hope to help chapters better understand and use the resources ASDA offers, especially newer leaders who may not yet know what's available to them. Ultimately, my goal as District Trustee would be to leave the district more connected, more engaged, and better supported than when I started.

What are 2-3 issues important to dental students?

1. Student debt and financial pressure

Dental education comes with a huge financial burden, and many students graduate with substantial debt. Rising tuition, cost of living, and uncertainty around reimbursement rates create stress that influences specialty choices, practice ownership timelines, and where graduates decide to live and work. Dental students care about transparency in tuition increases, access to financial literacy resources, and strong advocacy around loan repayment options and reimbursement policies.

Lack of education on the business side of dentistry

While dental schools do an excellent job preparing students clinically, many students feel underprepared when it comes to the business side of dentistry. Topics like evaluating associate contracts, understanding compensation models, negotiating offers, managing overhead, insurance participation, and planning for practice ownership are often minimally covered or not covered at all in school. As graduation approaches, students are expected to make major career

decisions without clear guidance on what a “good” offer looks like, how to protect themselves contractually, or how to plan long-term. Students want more education, mentorship, and resources to help bridge the gap between graduation and real-world practice.

Clinical preparedness and transition to practice

Students are also concerned about being fully prepared to enter practice or residency. Differences in clinical exposure, evolving licensure pathways, and changing board exam structures can create uncertainty about readiness after graduation. Dental students value strong advocacy for fair and standardized pathways that ensure they feel confident treating patients independently.