



Speaker of the House Short Answer Questions - Abby Halpern, Georgia '18

1) *What leadership experiences have equipped you for this national role?*

Dental school pummels all of us with a barrage of obstacles, patient situations and slippery slopes that we must learn to carefully navigate as we grow in our knowledge of the profession. Beyond that, I have challenged myself to become involved in ASDA at an early time in my dental school career. I was elected Legislative Liaison for my school as a first year and have progressed from that role to the Vice President, and now the President's role within my chapter. This past year, I worked to assist the District 4 cabinet in the role of Chapter Focus Coordinator for State Dental Associations. At the national level, I was given the opportunity to serve as the Legislative Coordinator for Districts 4 and 5 during the 2015-16 term. I have become incredibly passionate about the work that our Association accomplishes and in the hopes to further serve ASDA, I was given the opportunity to act as the Chair for the Council on Advocacy from April 2016 to March 2017. Although most of my experience has been within the realm of advocacy, I believe the challenges I have been presented with at the three levels—chapter, district, and national—assist me in better understanding the interworkings of our Association. The interactions I have experienced allow me to grasp how we are progressing as a collective 24,000 dental students not merely in our number but also in our direction.

2) *How do you work with or lead a team?*

I believe that leading a team depends upon how you work with them—as a collective and as individuals. I do not stick to one leadership style, as I think it's important for people in such a position to be malleable when it comes to facilitating productive work from all kinds of people. I seek to find how I can best inspire each member of my team to produce his or her best work. ASDA has provided me with numerous opportunities in leadership development, especially during my terms as a national leader. Although I have learned a staggering amount from these experiences, I know that this growth will continue well on into my career as a dental team leader. This organization instills a sense of positivity and a desire to continue to challenge ourselves on a personal level in order to progress as an organization. ASDA leaders at all levels find their greatest pride and achievement when their team members find success. My leadership style comes down to listening and being open minded before drawing a conclusion. This approach has allowed me to better understand our Association and its ideals of growth and progress. This style will help me to easily oscillate from the role of unbiased mediator as the Speaker to the House of Delegates to the role of non-voting member of the Board of Trustees. Because I choose carefully when I am given the opportunity to have an opinion, I believe that my voice is even stronger than my vote in the Board room.

3) *Why are you interested in this leadership position and what skills do you possess that would benefit the association?*

Prior to being accepted to dental school, I moved to Washington, D.C. to pursue my Master of Science in 2013; there, I became acutely aware of the political climate in the nation's capital. While my graduate education was preparing me for my future curriculum in dental school, I wanted to take advantage of living in D.C. and become educated in policy—specifically, health care policy as it relates to dentistry. During the spring semester, I was given the opportunity to intern with ADPAC. Not all professions carry such influence on the Hill; it is the overall involvement and unified mindset of dentists and dental students that afford the profession such power. If I learned a single thing from my time in D.C. and six months at ADPAC, it is that this level of cohesiveness is paramount in keeping the dentists in charge of dentistry for many years to come. I believe that these experiences in advocacy have a direct correlation with the responsibilities of the Speaker of the House. I have advocated for students in more of an external role; however, these outward expressions are born and further develop in the House of Delegates. Although you relinquish the “usual” advocacy opportunities to perform the role of Speaker, this position would allow me to help guide students in areas, in which they feel drawn to compose resolutions to strengthen and guide our association and, by way, the advocacy efforts we may take on down the line.

4) *What are 2-3 issues important to dental students and/or the position of speaker?*

The issue of licensure continues to be at the forefront of our strategic plan and I think this is for very good reason. The licensure process—with its pitfalls, perils, and high stress environment for both the patient and the student—has needed to change for decades; however, I do believe we have gained a foothold through our diligent advocacy efforts and thoughtful and thorough white paper. I believe this momentum will continue on, as we are already seeing major changes in many states. I believe that our relationships with state associations are paramount. The camaraderie that can be found when students and the experienced practitioner interact is the epitome of the dental profession. As I have witnessed from my experience with the Georgia Dental Association and further with my interactions to merge the ADA's Lobby Day with ASDA's, these two groups benefit greatly from one another. If we can solidify a mutual respect, understanding, and relationship between these two groups, I believe that ASDA will be able to make headway in a multitude of our focus areas. More so than my opinion of ASDA's direction, I hope to help students clearly express issues that they are passionate about through the resolution process. From my experience of authoring a Teledentistry resolution for Annual Session 2016, to witnessing it move through the various channels of the House and being assigned to a Council, I believe I have a great understanding of all aspects in this process.