

District 1

Keelin Hurtt, Connecticut 2026

How do you work with or lead a team?

As a leader, I believe the most effective way to inspire and guide a team is by leading through example. Demonstrating dedication, professionalism, and empathy in my own work shows my team that I am deeply committed to our shared goals and their individual success. When a leader's actions align with their words, it reinforces trust, mutual respect, and a sense of shared purpose. I prioritize establishing common visions and goals that everyone can work toward together, fostering a united and motivated team dynamic. Culture is at the heart of my leadership approach. I focus on creating an environment where every team member feels valued, respected, and safe to share their ideas. I believe that embracing diverse perspectives leads to innovation and strengthens problem-solving. To cultivate this, I encourage open communication, empathy, and collaboration, ensuring every voice is heard and appreciated. When working in teams, I strive to balance my natural gravitation toward leadership with active listening and collaboration. I make it a priority to appreciate and support all roles within the team, recognizing that each contribution is essential to our overall success. By valuing and respecting the input of others, I aim to create a team dynamic built on trust and shared responsibility, ensuring that everyone feels empowered to perform at their best.

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

Throughout my life, I have naturally gravitated toward leadership roles, but my intentional commitment to developing and refining my skills began in college. As a member of the leadership committee for my soccer team, I had the opportunity to attend leadership summits focused on exploring leadership styles and enhancing our abilities to guide and inspire others. These experiences laid the foundation for my understanding of effective leadership and fostering collaboration within a team. My leadership journey continued during dental school through involvement with several extra-curricular activities including the American Student Dental Association (ASDA). As a current member of the trustee cabinet for District 1 for ASDA, I have honed my ability to serve as a representative voice for students while working to strengthen connections between chapters and districts. At the chapter level, I have been actively involved with UConn ASDA, serving as Fundraising Chair and contributing to numerous initiatives. My involvement also extends to the district cabinet, where I have had the privilege of collaborating with leaders across the region to drive meaningful change and enhance the dental student experience.

Attending multiple national ASDA conferences, including the Annual Session in Denver, has deepened my appreciation for ASDA's impact on dental students. These experiences have

highlighted the importance of organized dentistry and the many ways students can engage beyond their chapter. Collectively, these leadership opportunities equipped me with the skills, insight, and passion necessary to serve effectively as district trustee to advocate for the needs of my peers and foster community.

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

As an ASDA trustee, I plan to build upon the strong foundation laid by my predecessors while striving to advance inclusivity, community, and empowerment throughout District 1. A key focus of my term will be increasing the diversity of involvement at the district level by fostering opportunities that are accessible and engaging for students across all schools. It has been a consistent priority in our district to ensure every school feels included and represented, and I intend to continue this effort by actively seeking input, encouraging collaboration, and creating initiatives that celebrate the unique perspectives and contributions of all students. Additionally, I aim to strengthen the sense of community within District 1 by cultivating connections among students. Networking opportunities will be at the forefront of my efforts, as I believe these relationships are critical for both professional growth and personal support. I am committed to empowering dental students to find their voice in the areas that resonate most with them, whether that's advocacy, professional development, wellness, or another facet of organized dentistry. By highlighting the variety of ways to get involved, I hope to inspire more students to discover their passions and engage meaningfully with ASDA while having fun with their experience. Through inclusive programming, accessible leadership opportunities, and a renewed focus on fostering a vibrant and supportive community, my goal is to help every student in District 1 feel seen, heard, and empowered to make an impact during their time in dental school and beyond.

What are 2-3 issues important to dental students?

Dental students face several critical issues that significantly impact their future careers, with student loan debt being one of the most pressing. The cost of dental education has risen dramatically, leaving many students to graduate with substantial debt that can take years, if not decades, to repay. This financial burden often influences career decisions, such as practice location, specialization, and the ability to pursue public health or academic roles. Another significant issue is the portability of licensure. Licensure requirements and pathways vary greatly from state to state, creating unnecessary barriers for dental professionals who wish to practice in different regions. The lack of uniformity in licensure examinations and the inconsistency in accepted modes of licensure, such as manikin-based exams versus live patient exams, further complicate the process. These discrepancies limit career mobility, delay workforce entry, and hinder access to care in underserved areas. Wellness within the dental

profession is equally vital. The demands of dental school, combined with financial and career pressures, often take a toll on students' mental and physical health. Promoting wellness initiatives, fostering supportive environments, and emphasizing work-life balance are essential to ensuring students can thrive both personally and professionally, reducing burnout and enhancing overall quality of life.