

Hey what's up hello, DECA emerging leaders!

I'm back. But this time I'm here in Seattle, Washington at the Western Region Leadership Conference. The past few days, your State Officer Team, including yours truly, have been exploring the city of Seattle and attending leadership workshops with guest presenters in order to hopefully bring back some new ideas and tactics to best prepare and excite you all for SCDC! I'm going to share a little of my experience from our Seattle trip with you, so I hope that you can take away some of these "big picture" ideas and use them for your preparation and attitude toward SCDC!

**HEY!** Please don't stop reading yet. I know that intro probably seemed like a yawn, but I'm not a robot, I promise. :) Try to stick with me until the end. Okay, here goes.

1. *Take a deep breath.* Okay, yeah, I know. This is, like, the most basic piece of advice you've ever received. But, I just attended a 45 minute workshop on "Leading through Emotion" in order to deliver this revolutionary piece of advice. ;) For real, though; if I gained anything from my last workshop, it was that the majority of us young leaders forget to simply *calm down* when we start stressin'. So: if you're nervous about SCDC, you can start by clearing your mind and honestly, breathing innnnnnnnn and ooooouuuuut.
2. *You will (most likely) fail. And that's a good thing.* So this "big idea" came with a bit of development. My second and third workshops were titled "10 Ways to Stand Out in the Crowd" and "Success after Failure". To be honest, "10 Ways to Stand Out in the Crowd" seemed like it was going to be the more interesting one of the two. And, I suppose in a way it was. I spent that workshop somewhat annoyed and frustrated by the infinite lists of things to accomplish, remember, and carry out if you're going to find success. It seemed to me that if I wasn't able to accomplish all "10 Things", I would be a failure. Turns out, as I discovered in my next workshop, "Success after Failure", it's completely true. But, as I continued to understand, that's okay. Jill Ginsberg, the speaker in this workshop, succeeded in calming me down about the everlasting list of things I felt I needed to perfect. She quotes, "I don't think we should just tolerate failure; we should actively seek and strive to fail." Anyway, I'm probably jibber-jabbing (#ELS), but what I want you all to take away from my response to these workshops is that your effort at SCDC should, and will be, somehow associated with failure, because that's truly how the business world works (See: Rejection by Emma Claire Spring). However, don't accept defeat; use it to better yourself and your DECA experience.
3. *DECA is not "just DECA".* Something that I've gained, not only from WRLC but from my state officer experience in general, is that DECA is not just some club where you get to miss school and present to judges. People actually, like, take DECA seriously, and thrive while doing so. I know, it's crazy. For many high school and collegiate level students, DECA is the organization that drives them to their future. Through leadership and

regional conferences, marketing events, and community outreach, DECA members strive to network and make connections that push them toward careers in business fields. I will be the first to admit that while I am somewhat less driven in the DECA-department than some international DECA students I've had the pleasure to collaborate with this year, DECA has, without a doubt, influenced my future and my ability to lead. I, of all people, should not be preaching the importance of taking DECA uber-serious; but, coming from someone who discovered what DECA is actually about my fourth year involved, this message might hit a little closer to home for some of you. As you prepare for this year's SCDC, it might (absolutely) be a beneficial decision to think about how DECA events and principles can help you as you near college and career choices.

4. *Lastly, HAVE FUN.* Again, I know, I'm sorry for the oh-so-cliche advice, but this is legit. DECA conferences, at least Montana DECA conferences, should not be an anxious mess of preparation and forced networking. Something that I personally believe Montana DECA does extremely well, and something that DECA members across the nation should learn to love, is enjoying their conference experience *as a kid*. DECA is a business professional organization, but we can play this part and still enjoy each other's professional personas while having a fun time. So yes, as a state officer, I am personally encouraging you to be goofy, laugh, and dance at this conference. Just remember to keep it classy, people.

During this WRLC experience, our state officer team had the opportunity to form a tighter bond and enjoy each other's goofy selves. DECA is not all about the pencil skirts and presentation posture. Driving 25+ hours in a car together, if nothing else, was a bonding experience! I can honestly tell you that my fellow 2016-17 state officers are not only my together-through-success-and-failure business partners, but a few of my closest friends, and my DECA advisors are more than just my supervisors, but familial mentors that I look up to and admire. Ugh. Sorry for all of the mushy-gushy DECA "ra-ra", but I want to emphasize the importance of DECA partnerships, and not only business partnerships, at SCDC this year. I encourage you to find friendships that mean more than a singular DECA presentation or workshop, but an actual interpersonal connection. Have fun with your friends in your chapter, but make friends with others as well. This conference is for you and me, so let's try to enjoy it *and* gain at least minimal business presentation exposure, because, you know: "DECA prepares emerging leaders and entrepreneurs for careers in business" or something like that. :)

If you made it to the end of this blog, kudos to you. A year ago, I probably would have gotten bored after the intro and shut my computer screen with rolled eyes. After my experience as a state officer, however, I feel as if I have gained insight on the "big picture" ideas that DECA exemplifies. I want to encourage you all to take the next step this year at SCDC, whether that means attending all of the leadership workshops, having a conversation with a state officer or director, or trying something completely different in your roleplays. Whatever it is for you,

remember to take a breath beforehand, strive to fail and recover, and to take DECA maybe a bit more seriously (BUT remember to experience it with some spunk).

Thanks homies (that is, if there are any homies left to thank). Can't wait to see you all at SCDC!  
Feel free to come chat me up if you see me :)

Xoxo

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