

*In response to the many questions that national officers receive from DECA members who are interested in running for national office, the 2008 – 2009 National Officer Team (President Uzo Ogu, NARVP Mike LeVecque, SRVP Shelby Talbott, CRVP Isaac Robinson, III) has put together this document to answer some of the concerns. If you have other questions, please do not hesitate to contact your National Officer Team.*

## **Myths and Truths about DECA National Officers**

Candidates from smaller State/Provincial Associations have no chance of winning:

**MYTH!**

Truth: The quality of the candidate and the effectiveness of his/her campaign are ultimately the most important factors that voting delegates consider when choosing who will represent them in the upcoming year. There have been many instances in the past of candidates from larger State/Provincial Associations that have lost to a candidate from a smaller delegation. The bottom line is that the best overall candidate will win, regardless of the size of their State/Provincial Association.

DECA members from Canada are not allowed to run for national office: MYTH!

Truth: Canadian members are certainly allowed and encouraged to run for office. Just like a candidate from the states, you must have the backing of your provincial advisor, complete the national application and put together a team for campaign support. If elected, traveling around the region requires the approval of transportation costs by the area that requests you. Unless travel costs are prohibitive, there should be no impediment to an officer from Canada being as active as one from the states.

The National Officer Candidate Application is impossible to finish. MYTH!

Truth: Although it looks intimidating, the application is NOT impossible. There is a method to the madness, and you need to be able to prove yourself as an individual willing to put in a healthy amount of work before you are approved as a candidate. Much of the application contains guidelines that are important for you to know in order to run a clean campaign. If you are truly interested in becoming a National Officer, you will be undaunted by the application. It only helps build the excitement and anticipation for what could possibly be in store for you, so enjoy every second while it lasts!

Campaigns under \$10,000 cannot win. MYTH!

Truth: The voting delegates who are choosing their future officers are not focused on what giveaways they receive or how grandiose the booth is, but of what the candidate has to offer as a leader. Focus on making a change in DECA, on presenting yourself as the best ambassador for the organization, not on the money you think you need to spend. The quality of the candidate is the most important factor that the voting delegates consider when they make their decision. Having a lavish campaign doesn't necessarily mean you will win.

Campaign money is entirely from the candidate's life savings. MYTH!

Truth: While each candidate may have to use some money from out of their pocket, the bulk of their campaign money is gained through diligent fundraising. Local businesses are usually very generous to supporting National Officer candidates from their area. Also, past candidates have gotten items donated to their campaign – costing them nothing!

Your speech is the most important part of your campaign. TRUTH!

Because of the great responsibility that is caucusing, it is sometimes impossible to caucus with each and every state. The speech session is the candidates' opportunity to get their message across to the voting delegates they could not meet. It provides the voting delegates with an opportunity to evaluate your public speaking and presentation skills – which are very important for National Officers to possess.

All National Officers must take a year off from school. MYTH!

Truth: While the National President almost always takes a year off from school, the Regional Vice Presidents usually attend school while serving their term. The National President travels so often that it would be near impossible for him/her to maintain a college course load while serving as President. However, many Presidents have taken online classes during their terms that they know will be accepted by the college of their choice in order to have a running start when they do go back to school. It can be very challenging for the Regional Vice Presidents to balance their DECA and school commitments, so it takes somebody that is great with time management and possesses superior organizational skills to be successful at both.

National Officers travel a lot. TRUTH!

This is true, for the most part. One of the perks of being a National Officer is the great travel opportunities that you will have. Newly-elected National Officers will attend their training over the summer at DECA Headquarters in Reston, Virginia. In the fall, Officers could potentially be invited to Fall Leadership Conferences and the Regional Vice Presidents will preside over their Regional Leadership Conference. Then, all of the National Officers will go to their Mid Year meeting at the site of the upcoming ICDC. National Officers also have the opportunity to attend State/Provincial Conferences in their region if they are invited. Finally, a National Officer's term culminates with the ICDC! Most of the traveling is done alone until you get to your destination. By the end of your term, you will be an expert traveler, aware of all of the joys (and sometimes the aggravations) that traveling can bring.

National Officers never take their DECA blazer off. MYTH!

Truth: This is obviously an over-exaggeration. But, many people (inaccurately) believe that National Officers don't have lives outside of DECA. While DECA is obviously a tremendous aspect of an officer's life, they are no different than the other 185,000 DECA members out there. They have a passion for DECA, but they also have a life outside of the organization. There is only one sense in which an officer does not "take the blazer off" - you do have to maintain a positive image for DECA, even when you are not on official duty. Remember, people know that you are a DECA officer and are always

looking to you to be a role model in your every day behavior. However, you are still free to enjoy a normal life – only with the added adventure that being a DECA officer provides. Conferences usually land on weekends, so there is always time for fun!

National Officers must be comfortable with their public speaking ability. TRUTH!

As a National Officer, you will often be required to speak and make presentations in front of large (or small) audiences. You will also have to be able to answer impromptu questions and speak “off the cuff” at many events. Since you are representing DECA, you need to present yourself as a confident and capable public speaker to put DECA in a positive light. National Officers receive extensive public speaking and leadership instruction during their training over the summer. So, if you aren’t currently an effective speaker, don’t worry, because you could definitely become one!

School professors will not cooperate with my DECA work. MYTH!

Truth: Professors will often be very excited about what you are doing and will be in full support of your efforts. If elected to a regional vice president position, it is very important that you approach your professors at the beginning of the semester and explain to them exactly what you have gotten yourself into and that you are 100% willing to do anything and everything possible to make the semester go smoothly. As long as you don’t pose DECA as a potential problem, you will find that you’re professors are enthusiastic about your term in office. You can also get support from the DECA national office in the form of a letter to your professors explaining the importance of your position and some of what it will entail during the year.

It is difficult to balance school and DECA work. TRUTH!

It would be unfair to tell you that juggling college courses and DECA assignments on top of conference traveling is easy breezy. If elected vice president of your particular region, you will be experiencing a much heavier workload than your classmates. It is not impossible, but there will be times when you are frustrated and feeling overwhelmed. As with anything else, a good attitude and a little faith will get you through anything, and the amount of work will begin to feel natural. When your DECA term of office is over, you will find that you have developed organizational skills that will serve you well in all that you do.

The rest of the National Officer Team will just be people I email back and forth and to whom I never become close. MYTH!

Truth: You would be so shocked at the small amount of time it takes to establish extremely strong bonds with the other National Officers. These people, along with DECA Staff, literally become a second family to you. You will hate separating from them and miss them the second you are away from them. They become your coworkers, fellow ambassadors, support group, and above all, new best friends. The hundreds of miles separating you all is forgotten the minute you reunite and these officers are people you know you will never forget as long as you live.

Being a National Officer is a full time job. TRUTH!

You are trusted by your peers, advisors, and parents to represent the organization and do most traveling and work on your own. As an officer you will be given assignments with a deadline and it is your responsibility to ensure that you complete all work on time and in full. DECA work is never hard to find!

Being a National Officer is a HUGE honor. TRUTH!

Having the opportunity to serve as a National Officer is quite an honor. You are one of only five members, out of over 185,000, that will be elected as a National Officer. Your year as a National Officer is guaranteed to be full of experiences that are unlike anything you have ever encountered. You will have the opportunity to meet hundreds of members and business executives on the National Advisory Board. You will be expected to present workshops, give speeches, and recommend ideas that could fundamentally change our organization, and these are just a very few of the wonderful things you will come across as a DECA National Officer. And the “honor” lasts for more than just your term of office. There is a strong alliance of officer alumni who have formed a group to keep having impact on DECA. And don’t overlook the value of the experience as a resume builder and as a skill builder for your career.

National officers have to live in Reston, Virginia. MYTH!

Truth: National officers are free to live wherever they were or will be for college without being forced to relocate. All travel arrangement will be made from that location. National Officer Training does take place at DECA Headquarters in Reston over the summer, though.

National officers have to pay for their travel. MYTH!

Truth: National officer travel is funded by National DECA as well as the State Association that requests you at their conference. If elected, you will be reimbursed for all DECA-related travel expenses that you incur during your trip. One expense that you will be happy to incur will be for all of the pictures you will take on your travels. Just don’t go hog-wild with the souvenirs!