Application for Student Body President, 2022-2023

Please note that this application will be made available to the general student body for their consideration in choosing with whom to cast their vote. Questions are designed to help candidates reflect on their character, calling, and competencies as they apply to leadership at Messiah University. Please limit answers to a maximum of 250 words.

Name: Samantha Neal
Running Mate: Mason Powers
Email Address: sn1247@messiah.edu
Expected Graduation: Spring 2023
Major(s): Physics
Minor(s): Philosophy

1. Why do you want to serve as Student Body President? In your own words, what purpose do you believe the position should serve on campus?
I believe that the role of the Student Body President should be to give the student body a say in the decisions that the Messiah University administration makes and to mediate the relationship between the student body and the school administration. I want to serve as President because I am excellent at understanding multiple perspectives and evaluating them on the basis of their merits, which has made me an excellent mediator.

2. In your opinion, what is the most pressing issue currently facing Messiah University and how would you address it?
I think one of the most pressing issues that the Messiah community is facing is a feeling of isolation and alienation, not just from each other, but from the Messiah administration. Students are finding it difficult to make new friends, partially because of COVID regulations, but also because of how many cliques have formed on campus. This social alienation is leading to worsening mental health and increased burnout, which leads to further feelings of isolation. This vicious cycle creates an unhealthy campus environment, and must be hindered as much as possible.
The student body also feels that, as a result of certain decisions that the school administration has made, the administration only cares about bringing in new students and not about taking care of the students who are already here and paying tuition. There is a high number of current students who are considering transferring out of Messiah, or have already done so. We need to provide for our current students and friends so that they have a reason to stay at Messiah.

To address these issues, I have a number of potential ideas. To address the social isolation on campus, I plan on advocating for increased funding for clubs so that the clubs on campus can hold larger meetings and events, facilitating greater connections between students who may not have met otherwise.

To aid in the relationship between the school administration and the student body, I aim to advocate for the students by advocating for policy reforms that give students more of a voice. For example, I will advocate for improvements in the on-campus parking system so that fewer students are getting parking tickets. I will call for reforms in the school’s policy on LGBTQ+ students so that this significant, and yet unheeded, portion of our Messiah community, feels the acceptance and love they deserve as Christians and Messiah students. I will advocate for giving the student body a voice in campus improvements, so that if the student body feels that their tuition dollars would be best spent elsewhere, their voices will be recognized. Ultimately, my aim is to do what I can to foster a closer connection between the Messiah administration and the student body.

3. Discuss 2-3 other agenda items that you would like to address as Student Body President.

Most of the issues I aim to address in my term as president fall under the broader category of restoring connections, so I have discussed many of my ideas in the previous question. However, I do plan on changing the alcohol policy to be more fair to our older students while also keeping the campus safe. I also want to look into providing more options for students who have certain dietary restrictions, as finding safe meals with an allergy or other restriction is quite difficult on the Messiah campus as it stands.

4. What previous leadership positions have you held on campus? How have these or other experiences deepened your thinking about effective leadership?

The biggest leadership experience I have had on campus is my current role as president of the physics club. The physics club is a smaller club, and while I have loved running it this year, it has presented its own unique challenges. Because we are a smaller club, we have had to learn how to balance our big ideas for events and the resources available to us, often compromising in some ways in order to put together an event that is both fun and realistically achievable for us. Additionally, because we’re a smaller club, I personally do a lot of the legwork in terms of arranging for event space, advertising and making posters, and other smaller, yet necessary, tasks.
I have learned a lot from running the physics club, such as how to temper my own ambitions for the club for the practical common good. I have learned when to step up and take charge as well as when to step aside and let other people have a say. I have also gained public speaking skills as well as people management skills.

5. What does effective leadership look like to you and how do you plan to achieve that with your running mate?
Mason and I believe that effective leadership looks like establishing an effective balance between being compassionate and understanding and being authoritative and decisive. We plan to do this by always listening to the different voices and opinions, considering them fairly, then making a decision based on what is in the best interest of the community.

6. The demanding role of Student Body President requires considerable strength in the following areas: organizational skills, attention to detail, flexibility, diplomacy, compassion and open-mindedness. Please choose a few of these areas and speak to your aptitude or qualifications.
As a philosophy student, I have to be open-minded. In order to successfully understand the arguments I’m studying, I need to know why a rational person would hold a certain position, which requires both an understanding of logic and a certain degree of empathy. Having this mindset in life has led me to be a more compassionate and understanding person as well. I can apply my curiosity about other ways of thinking about the world to my relationships with people who are different from me, which almost always leads to closer personal connections with those people as well deeper knowledge of the world, both of which also lead me closer to God.
I care about detail, but not in a paralyzing way; I care about detail to the extent that it serves the big picture of what I’m trying to do and the character with which I am trying to do that thing. That being said, I do prefer to do things a certain way. I maintain routines as much as I can as I find that having a routine builds a habit of completing tasks and staying on track with deadlines. I also have a respect for tradition. If something has historically been done a specific way, then I will likely aim to incorporate that tradition into how I will try to accomplish that same goal. Even so, tradition and routine are second to reason and truth. Routine and tradition only hold value for me in as much as they serve a greater purpose.

7. If elected, how will your character and Christian faith influence your leadership?
I was raised in the Eastern Orthodox Christian tradition, and if I had to summarize Orthodox theology in a single word, that word would be “relational.” For me, living well is living in relationship with God and living in relationship with other people. If elected, I would hope that that word “relational” would also define my administration. I want to build connections, be they connections between my peers and I or relationships between
the student body and the Messiah administration. I want to facilitate stronger connections between friends, new connections between strangers, and greater love for Jesus.

Applications must be submitted in full, along with a current resume in PDF form, to sgatreasurer@messiah.edu before 11:59pm on February 14th. No late applications will be considered. A completed petition form bearing the names and signatures of 200 current Messiah University student endorsements must be also slid under the door of the SGA Office (Larsen 201) before the same deadline.