

SOPHIA CHEN EXEC SEC

List any previous leadership positions or experiences

- 1) IN East Asia Region Head
- 2) freshmen mentor for summer STEM
- 3) EACF (church) youth worship team leader

Why do you want to be a member of Student Council? Why are you running for the position that you are running for this year?

- I want to be a part of stuco because of my admiration for all the work I've witnessed stuco carry out, and I am running for executive secretary because I identify with this position the most.
- First of all, explaining my reason for wanting to be in stuco: I've been at this school for two years now and been to more than a couple work days for school events. I've enjoyed being a volunteer, but even more so I want to contribute to the beginning of the process as well-- the planning stage. Volunteers have the honor of working behind the scenes to bring events to life, but as a part of stuco I can better contribute ideas and creativity to the planning stage of events. Because I really admire the effort that I've seen my friends (stuco members) put into this school, I want to be a part of the entire process. Previously, I've had experience planning the east asia region for international night. I went through the entire process from planning to buying to setting up to finally displaying our work-- and I enjoyed every moment of it. Therefore, my eagerness for being a part of stuco's entire process is the same.
- Secondly, explaining my reason for running for executive secretary: Although I've been told that despite the different titles, stuco members are pretty much equal in the work that they do, I chose the position of executive secretary because I am fully confident in my abilities to--well, be a secretary! A quote from google: "An executive secretary is responsible for organizing all activities of a top executive." Organization is my strong suit and I believe no one who knows me would say so otherwise. Responsibility has become a standard I hold myself up to when knowing I represent a community. As opposed to being president, vice president, parliamentarian, or other positions, I feel like secretary suits me most because of my confidence in my work. I do not think I have the best characteristics for leading as a president, but I am very confident in the quality of my work and planning skills...leading me to choose to run for executive secretary.

From your perspective, what is the role of the Student Council at GSMST and in our community at large?

- GSMST student council's role at our school is obvious and evident through all the events that stuco carries out throughout the year. Stuco's role is not only to set an example for peers in terms of leadership and commitment, but is also to be the connecting link among the different sectors of our diverse student body. Being a majority minority school with strong emphasis on academics and no school sports, it is hard to avoid the ever-present problems of stress, competition, and lack of school spirit. Stuco's work around the school gives opportunities for fun and de-stressing, and is also a chance to collect our student body in one place (as schools would at a sports game) in order to generate our school spirit through a different route. Stuco members, being the ones planning and carrying out these plans, are the leaders of the movement and the enforcers of unity among our community.
- In terms of in our community at large, I believe GSMST's stuco is representative of our entire school in relation to our capabilities and the values we stand for. Stuco's community work is a showcase of what our students are capable of, and stuco members' appearance at state conventions or other public gatherings is a showcase of our morals and values. Therefore, since stuco's job is to be a good representative of our school, stuco members should be able to reach a high standard in terms of ability and behavior in order to represent our school well.

List up to three qualities would you use to describe an effective leader. What leadership skill(s) is your strength? How will you use that skill(s) to benefit Student Council and GSMST?

- Although there are many attributes that can be associated with an effective leader, I believe the three most relevant to GSMST's student council would be commitment, accountability, and humility. In my eyes, commitment is the prerequisite to being a leader for any position in any community, because only genuine dedication to a population or cause would motivate a leader to act for that group of people or goals. Accountability comes in as the next step because motivation and responsibility come hand in hand. People must be able to trust that their leader will carry out their will in order to actually bring improvement to a community. Lastly, humility is an attribute that is often overlooked but must be constantly enforced upon oneself. Being a leader is not to be the most important, but to be a servant for others. This does not mean that pride in being a part of stuco is wrong, but the pride must come as genuine joy of benefitting the community and not in one's own talent.
- Of the three attributes listed above, I believe accountability will be my best contribution to student council. As an applicant for this position, I do not think I lack any of the three qualities, but responsibility for completing tasks to the best of my ability is what I am most confident in. I have

never produced unsatisfactory work for anything I've been dedicated to, and the same will go for student council because I care for this community. Having been to workdays in the past and communicating with the many members of my friend group already in stuco, I am well aware of the stress stuco members face and the abundance of duties they need to complete. Nevertheless, no matter which event I'm accountable for or which duties I'm expected to complete, I will not fail to do so.

What would you most like to improve about your own leadership skills to become a better leader?

- If the question above had asked for four qualities of an effective leader, the next in my head would've been good communication skills. I do not think I am unable to communicate with others, but being honest, this is one aspect I've been struggling with for years now. My communication skills have improved dramatically since three years before when I could barely bring myself to talk in class, and also from seven years before when I could hardly make eye contact with anyone but my beloved mother. As of today, I strive to be friendly and open in communicating with others, but I know there are occasions when I am too harsh in forcing my opinions on others, and there are other times when I am too timid to even mention what's on my mind. I need an in between. I am not ashamed of this weakness because I believe I've come a long way already, but I think I can do better. I want to find a balance and train myself to be a compelling speaker, one who can persuasively translate my ideas without forcing them upon others.

Describe an activity for a new event that Student Council could host.

- When driving to Atlanta earlier in the summer this year, I came across an alley of homeless people standing in line for a temporary food pantry set up at the curb. The temporary food stands were set up by a local church whose youth were serving as volunteers. Seeing other teenagers working to help a community already sparked this idea in my head as something to do with friends, my church, or even my school. Since our school already has a requirement for service hours upon graduation, why not kill two birds in one stone and organize an event for setting up food stands in impoverished areas near Atlanta? GSMST's student council will have to find locations and contact administrations to gain permission for setting up things in those areas, and will also have to raise money or donations for food/goody bags to hand out. The last step would be to attract students to contribute to the effort through volunteering at our temporary stands that day. For one, this event will temporarily relieve those in need and two, it will fulfill the graduation requirement for some students.

How can Student Council improve its communication with the student body?

- In times of quarantine, communication is definitely harder than it was before. Being a student at this school, I believe the methods that would most attract my attention would be a) social media and b) friends. First of all, I know GSMST stuco already has an instagram with constant posts about new events occurring. I believe this would become the main source of communication between stuco and the student body during quarantine. To strengthen that aspect, stuco members have their own social medias that can be used as well. However, even if stuco can get the message across to the majority of the student body, I think the more pressing issue is how to gain more participation...which brings me to point b) friends. Admittedly, I've never been an active participant in school events. I fully admit it and I will tell you why I've been that way: Cuz I'm lonely. Yes it's that simple. I believe the key to gaining participation stuco's events and fundraisers is not to target individuals and merely get the message across, but to target groups of friends or clubs. People like me are more likely to participate when set up with a group who will do it together, so changing "you should come!" to "Y'all can do this together!" is what I believe would be more effective in bringing our community together.

What do you think is the single greatest challenge facing our GSMST community and how can Student Council help to resolve this challenge?

- In the midst of corona and in quarantined times, I have personally experienced a sharp decline in interaction and communication with classmates and friends. Those I used to see at least once a day in the halls are now miles away in their own homes, too far away for me to meet. Of course, texting and instagram exist and I could use both, but don't you think it's awkward to just be like "hey" out of the blue for no apparent reason? (maybe it's just me? But I really don't think so.) Being quarantined and having to do digital learning has separated our community to the extent where even breakout rooms are uncomfortable. Therefore, my solution for this would be to give people an EXCUSE to catch up with others. We can't meet in person, but I'm confident stuco can think of digital events to host...one example being a night of Among Us. There are many other ideas that can be brought up, but a popular game such as Among Us is appealing to students and can be hosted online. More importantly, it gives an excuse for us to come back together without the awkwardness of DMs or the uncomfortable silence of breakout rooms.