



AMANDA GAO

2019-2020 Executive Council Member

HOSA, Inc. Board—Secondary Representative

PROFILE

Amanda Gao is in her freshman year as a Global Health major at Georgetown University, aiming to learn about health disparities around the world as well as how to address them. That is why Amanda is seeking a career as a public health physician.

Amanda was the keynoter at the Thanksgiving Ideas Meeting held at The Occidental at 1475 Pennsylvania Avenue NW, Washington, DC on November 20, 2019. Forty (40) HOSA advocates attended the luncheon including several HOSA-100 NAC members.

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Good afternoon everyone. My name is Amanda Gao and it's an honor to be joining all of you here today. I am currently serving on the HOSA Executive Council as the Secondary Board Representative, and I stand here today, 7 years into my HOSA journey, with an immense love for this organization and all it has to offer. But, I didn't always understand what HOSA would do for me, how central it would be for my every day and my identity, and how much it would change my life.

As a child, I didn't grow up knowing what I wanted to do. Instead, as a little 7th grader, I constantly looked up to my older brother who was constantly going to speech and debate tournaments and writing for the school paper. He had a *why* for his actions; he understood what he wanted. And, at the time, I didn't.

Now in retrospect, it was completely and totally fine that I didn't have my entire life plan as an 11-year-old, and it would take several more years for me to define my purpose. What I *was* extremely lucky to find in middle school though, was my own *why*. And that occurred when I joined HOSA.

At my first HOSA meetings, I was learning about the difference between MRIs and X-Rays and how to evaluate them. I learned about human anatomy. I was taught ankle taping, suturing, and injections. I was fascinated by what I could learn and had so much fun outside engrossing myself in skills outside the classroom.

In my first leadership position, I experienced firsthand how leaders were created. I went from being extremely shy and quiet to gaining confidence and serving California HOSA, my original home state, as a state officer for two years before being elected to the Executive Council. I was taught concepts such as servant leadership and being a positive influential leader through HOSA's leadership conferences. I worked to improve myself as I realized how healthcare is not only about knowledge, but also strong leadership and communication skills.



At every conference I attended, whether it was a regional, state, or international conference, surrounded by thousands of like-minded peers, I found a home. I felt an instant sense of comfort and camaraderie among other HOSA members. Working together was vital as we created service projects for mental health and pediatric cancer to help raise awareness about healthcare issues and serve our communities.



I could go on and on about the experiences I've had in HOSA, as each opportunity has shaped me differently. Overall though, since joining HOSA, I've been driven by a single, defining *why*. I am in HOSA because I want to offer direct help, in a healthcare setting, to those who are traditionally harder to reach. That's also why I'm now in my freshman year as a Global Health major at Georgetown University, aiming to learn about health disparities around the world as well as how to address them. And that's why I'm seeking a career as a public health physician.

HOSA has given me my why, and it helped define my path. That's what this organization does, and it's done the same for many others. It gave a close friend of mine the realization that they're interested in biochemistry research, another an interest in healthcare administration. It sparked someone else's passion for public health policy and gave another friend a platform for thinking of and developing medical innovations. And, for millions of other HOSA members, past and present, this organization has done the same. And it will continue to do so towards the future as HOSA continues to expand and evolve. HOSA gives us—the students—the encouragement, the path, the why of our academic and career goals. It gives us resources and guidance, purpose and belonging.

I, like many others, owe it to HOSA for the path that I'm on. And I, like many others, am eternally grateful for this amazing organization.



Photo 1—View of The Occidental Restaurant

Photo 2—HOSA, Inc. Board Chair Janet Villarreal welcomed guests to the Ideas Meeting as well as the HOSA-100 National Advisory Council.

Photo 3—Dr. Jim Koeninger, Executive Director, reviewed workforce shortage articles and that HOSA-Future Health Professionals is a vital pipeline of qualified future health professionals in various stages of completing their academic and professional credentials.

Photo 4—Amanda Gao, Executive Council Member and member of the HOSA, Inc. Board of Directors, was the keynoter at the Ideas Meeting. Amanda was honored to present Rear Admiral Joyce Johnson, MD with a HOSA-100 Member Recognition Award presented to HOSA-100 members attending the 2019 ILC.