



Student of the Year 2020

Sam Mathew

Richland College Student Government Association
TJCSGA Region II

If there's one thing that you'll learn by reading the paper that sits before you, it's that Sam Matthew is a renaissance man with many sides and layers to his life. He's a young man who brings vigor to every place he visits, inspiring others to achieve more with every stride he takes. Chris Hadfield, an astronaut and former Commander of the International Space Station, said that being a true leader is not measured by the glory one claims for themselves but by their ability to motivate and guide a team towards a common objective using the resources and dynamics at hand. Furthermore, a leader must stand up when a situation demands it and work tirelessly to create a pathway for others to achieve their goals while learning how to be the best versions of themselves. Sam is a perfect embodiment of the ideas of stewardship and leadership entwined with this definition. He has devoted himself to ensure that Richland College fosters a safe, fulfilling, and inclusive environment for the students, all while stretching his impact far beyond Richland at the same time. Sam's evident sense of humility coupled with a work ethic of rare intensity makes him a person that is truly one in a million.

Throughout Sam's time at Richland, he consistently held an excellent level of engagement in the activities of our SGA chapter. Joining it to pursue a drive to make a broader impact on the community of the college, he could be seen in meetings dating as far back as fall 2018. It was evident from the very beginning of the following school year, 2018-19, that he would be an extremely active member. He participated in nearly every event associated with Richland's SGA, attended the fall regional conference in 2018, and even ran for the position of Historian when the position opened up. He won the position, and from that day on committed himself unflinching to the duties of the office. His work on documentation of the events on campus, as well as the planning, marketing, and execution of all upcoming events established himself as an applied and motivated officer early on. In the following semester, Sam played an

instrumental role in the creation of our scrapbook, which won first place at the state level competition.

In the election held last spring, Sam ran for the position of treasurer, the position he currently holds. Once again, his level of participation over the course of the year was absolutely stellar; he touched every discussion, activity, and event that was held at Richland. Most notably these include several town hall style meetings held periodically throughout the semesters, mobile food bank events held on alternating Tuesdays, and a campaign for voter registration. He has also represented Richland's SGA several times in meetings held with the College President, promoting the ideas of the general assembly and student body with an undeniably eloquent style. As a student worker in Richland's Office of Student Life, Sam has played a big part in student engagement at large, and he even served as an orientation leader for many new student orientations in gaps between semesters. As treasurer, Sam has done everything in his power to help the clubs at Richland to make applying for funds as seamless as possible, and he has gone above and beyond in his representation of the SGA chapter as a whole.

Sam's involvement is not limited to SGA however; he also possesses leadership positions in other distinguished organizations such as Phi Theta Kappa. He currently holds the title of Vice President of Leadership for PTK and has made his objective to provide support to students to realize their potential and gain confidence in their own leadership capabilities. He understands that our college's ability to continue its improvement is entirely dependent on encouraging new leaders who will have a lasting impact on the future of the school. He is currently coaching and serving as the campaign manager of Richland College's nominee to be the next International President of Phi Theta Kappa. He is also collaborating to prepare his chapter to run for office at the regional level by mentoring the candidate running for president of the Texas Region. He also

was in charge of researching and developing the Honors In Action event for our college. This event educated students on the issues of student debts and how to better manage their finances. He was also involved in the College Project event where he organized a full week boot camp teaching students what scholarships are available for them, how to obtain them, transfer information, and how to be work ready.

Sam is also one of the most active members of the Dallas County Community College District Street Team, which functions as the team designated to be ambassadors of the entire college district. He has participated in various community outreach events across the metroplex, volunteering to talk with local residents about the benefits of community colleges. As a street team ambassador, he has also served as a student voice on panels for several colleges, high schools, and even elementary schools. Through events like this, his willingness to cause positive change in all age groups, demographics and neighborhoods can be seen shining bright. His advocacy for the importance of community colleges and the impact they can have has influenced countless people over his time with the street team.

With full consideration of the marvelous involvement he had with the Student Government Association, the Phi Theta Kappa honors society, and the DCCCD Street Team, Sam was selected as one of only four students to attend the Community College Legislative Summit in Washington DC. He represented all seven of the district's colleges alongside his three peers in attendance. Sam understood the magnitude of the opportunity at hand and made full use of the situation by holding discussions on high impact issues directly with our US House Representative Colin Allred, DCCCD Chancellor Joe May, and several other figures of significant importance. The topics he spoke about included everything from Pell grants, and how they've helped him personally, DACA and its effect on students of community colleges, and

other resolutions of the district. His professionalism ensured that all 160,000+ students of DCCCD were represented well at the national level.

Sam has also proven to be a person who tends to the needs of his peers by advising and mentoring fellow students on matters ranging from personal issues to making academic suggestions. He has helped many students come out of their shells and be more involved on campus. He makes sure to attend every SGA organized event such as Town Hall meetings, Fundraisers, and Open Mic to help create an inclusive environment for Richland College Students. Moreover, he volunteers at college events, other clubs and organization events, and Office Of Student Life events such as food trucks, which arrive at Richland college every other Tuesday every month. In 2019 Sam joined the Male Achievement Program, which grooms the future male leaders how to set stable feet into the society and also in the academic community. Because of Sam's involvement with this program, he has improve his leadership skills.

He participated in the training to become a Census ambassador and he will be providing this training to his community to spread the word about the benefits of participating in the census 2020. He is meeting with faculty and staff to create an awareness program to reach as many people as we can. All these efforts are ensuring that our district can have access to the most accurate information of the amount of residents and demographic in our communities so we can have an appropriate budget for the next decade.

He is also a strong supporter of the Student Green Team Organization. He has helped fund and organize each of the events hosted by this organization such as the Lake Clean up, tree counting, and the end of the semester meeting thanks to his position in SGA and Phi Theta

Kappa. His participation is not limited to the logistics of these events but he also participated as a student leader onsite, providing his expertise to the volunteers.

He has been advocating youth sports and how it impacts positive energy on our society as a staff of Varsity University. Varsity Spirit's commitment to the health and well-being of young people is embedded in our high-quality educational curriculum and their leading role in the establishment of instructional safety standards. They also believe in encouraging cheerleaders and dancers to be leaders on and off the field by getting involved and giving back to their communities. Mainly, he has been serving as Cheerleader Staff for the past 2 years.

Sam's involvement on and off campus earned him the president's service volunteer award, a recognition from the White House that only five students in Richland College manage to obtain.

All the above-mentioned accomplishments do not attest to the type of person Sam is. While they are extremely noteworthy. There is more to Sam than meets the eye. An initial impression will give you what everyone can see; an easygoing, kind person who will do anything for his friends. His heart of gold belies his amazing drive. Anyone can see that this man has done enough for this community to boast about it with reasonable pride. Yet, Sam stands in this organization with humility and grace. This side of his otherwise multifaceted personality is what draws people to him. This is what makes him an amazing leader and an invaluable friend.

Feb. 21, 2020

I've been waiting for this moment.

Waiting for the day that Sam Mathew would finally ask me to write him a recommendation letter. You see, Sam is extremely humble, so I must steal any chance I can to brag about his kind spirit and amazing academic successes. Because I know he will *never* boast about himself.

Sam's accomplishments are *many*. But what is at the top of the list is his dedication to servant leadership. That is where I will spend the bulk of my limited word count!

Others notice it too – Sam's dedication to service and leadership. In fact, just this month he was selected to travel with our Chancellor, Dr. Joe May, to Washington D.C. to speak on behalf of Dallas' community college students during the National Legislative Summit. Sam was one of only four students (out of more than 90,000 students at our colleges) selected to speak at the summit. The deciding committee later told me Sam's government relations work in D.C. far exceeded their expectations.

I wasn't surprised in the least. I have known and served alongside Sam for almost two years now. And I have learned to expect his best, because that is what he brings to every project – 100 percent of the time. You see, Sam is one of the student ambassadors on our DCCCD Street Team – repeatedly volunteering the little free time he has (away from maintaining a full-time job and a 3.8 GPA) to go into the community and talk to people about the importance of getting a college education. As the manager for 80+ student ambassadors I can confidently state Sam is a leader amongst leaders. However, he is not the type who needs to go to the front of the room to lead. He's more likely to be right at your side, supporting common goals in an effort to bring about real, *lasting* change. I guess that's why the student body elected Sam the Vice President of Leadership for the college's chapter of Phi Theta Kappa, international honor society. Sam is not just good at leading, however, but also at growing new leaders. He supports, teaches, presents, coaches, and mentors other leaders on campus ... all in an effort to build his community.

But Street Team and PTK aren't the only college organizations where Sam serves on the leadership team. This year he is *also* treasurer for the Student Government Association – a position that requires trustworthiness and leadership just as much as it does accounting skills – as well as the social chair for the Campus Activities Board.

The civic involvement and community service projects Sam are involved in due to these four leadership roles on campus are extensive and far-reaching. He serves on student roundtables and speaks as a panelist for various chamber and business events, while simultaneously training to become a community representative for the 2020 Census. He is passionately feeding the hungry (350+ volunteer hours for the food bank this academic year) and equipping Dallas' youth with classroom supplies (750 backpacks were donated to kids due to Sam's collaborative efforts).

Long story short: Sam goes above and beyond. Even when he reached out to me to ask I write this recommendation letter, he gave me a well-written resume and a numbered list of answers to all of my questions.

Why does Sam continually exceed expectations at college? Is it because he is an international student, so tuition costs (and dedication level) are higher? Or maybe it is because he entered the working world first before enrolling in school? Could it be because Sam is the youngest of three siblings and looks up to his sisters' educational pursuits? Or is his legacy of caring passed down from his mother – a nurse? Perhaps it is his deep faith that holds him to a higher standard?

Whatever Sam's drive for service, leadership and civic involvement, I can tell you one thing. It's not for the awards or accolades. Sam has given away his awards and well-earned prizes to his peers at times. And I don't think his motivation is the process itself. Sam cares about people and community. He raises his hand again and again to make a difference – whether talking to elementary kids during their career days to using his vocal talents to carol for neighbors during the holidays.

Who is this hardworking student?!

- He is a servant leader and a role model to other working college students.
- He is a social, Snickers-loving, man of character.
- He is an organized, global-minded, sports-car lover.
- He is a strategic, civic and community engagement champion.

And he is not just my mentee, but also my mentor. I've learned much from Sam, especially how to lead *better*.

It is my honor to recommend Sam Mathew as Texas Junior College Student Government Association's 2020 Student of the Year. Thank you in advance for equipping him with the financial resources to continue to serve on his campus, in his local community and across the state of Texas. Sam will take your gift with a big smile and pay it forward to others in need.

He will make an *excellent* dentist one day!

Kind Regards,



Marielle McGregor, Sr. Manager
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