

New SGA President Embraces Cultural Diversity, Free Speech

By Hope Austin on April 25, 2016



If Navya Sane could describe herself in one word, it would be “amoebbit.”

“It’s the combination of an amoeba and a rabbit,” Sane said. “Like an amoeba, I like to move around. Once I’m comfortable, like a rabbit, I just establish my spot.”

Only two semesters into her graduate Electrical Engineering program, Sane has established herself as the President of the Student Government Association for the 2016-2017 school year.

Sane and her slate, UMKC Arise, won with an overwhelming majority of votes. The team consisted of Sane and Vamsi Reddy, the candidate for Vice President. UMKC Arise ran with the tagline “We can and we will.”

Hailing from India, Sane was attracted to UMKC’s tagline: “A place for people going places.”

“I was, like, wow, this is something I should try,” Sane said. Being both a lover of travel and very frugal, Sane found her match in UMKC.

Sane became an active UMKC student, participating in cultural events, especially ones that involve dancing.

“I love dancing,” Sane said. “It’s my passion.”

Being involved on campus allowed Sane to see herself involved in student government, but it was current SGA president Ida Ayalew, who ultimately inspired sane to run for president.

"I have never thought of myself as a boss, but I always wanted to be a leader," Sane said. "So I thought, '[Ayalew's] a good leader. I should learn from this.'"

Sane, an International Student Ambassador for International Student Affairs, hopes to address key issues concerning international students. Sane identified improving communication between international students and university officials as a key issue for international students. When students have trouble communicating, their concerns go unheard by the university. In turn, this makes it harder for international students to adapt to a different culture.

Sane also wants to be like Ayalew in that she wants to inspire others.

"I wanted to touch people, inspire them," Sane said. "Not just in my student organization, but all other students. I wanted to be the common voice that they can reach out to."

Giving voice to the voiceless is a recurring theme in Sane's platform. Sane describes herself as the type of person her peers with which her peers are comfortable sharing their concerns. Sane wants the whole university to enjoy that level of comfort via free speech zones on campus.

"Having such a forum, or free speech zones around the campus will let all the students feel safe and they'll believe that 'yes, we are the voiceless and we should be heard,'" Sane said.

Sane also plans to be proactive on LGBTQIA issues.

"Yes, there's the Rainbow Lounge where people can go and feel safe," Sane said. "That's not the end. That's just the beginning and maybe we stopped at the beginning."

Sane believes that the SGA president should bridge the gap among the university, the students and faculty. Part of this involves maintaining UMKC's culture of diversity and encouraging students to embrace it.

"If I'm an Indian student, I'm comfortable with my Indian students," Sane said. "I should be comfortable working with other student organizations, be it the Arab students or the African Students because we all want to be connected."