

## ***District 2***

***Joshua Velazquez, Touro 2026***

### **How do you work with or lead a team?**

What I enjoy most about being part of and leading a team is collaborating, adapting, and supporting one another. I firmly believe that effective leadership requires fostering a positive and encouraging environment where every individual can thrive. These values have guided me in various roles, allowing teams to succeed through trust, communication, and shared effort.

During my collegiate rowing career, I learned the importance of teamwork and trust. Maintaining a cohesive boat required more than pulling an oar—it involved trusting our coxswain to guide us and adapting to real-time challenges, like overtaking another boat or maintaining a unified pace. This experience taught me how critical it is to align personal efforts with the team's rhythm to achieve collective success.

Similarly, serving on the Touro ASDA Executive Board presented opportunities to lead with adaptability and collaboration. As Treasurer, I took on the challenge of reviving the Vendor Fair. With no existing protocols or guidelines, I worked closely with our President to split responsibilities and establish processes, from contacting vendors to securing administrative approval. By dividing tasks effectively, empowering team members, and maintaining clear communication, we created one of the largest vendor fairs in Touro's history.

Leadership, for me, is about recognizing when to step in and when to empower others to act. By trusting the team's abilities, remaining adaptable, and providing support, I strive to create an environment where everyone can contribute meaningfully and achieve shared goals.

### **What leadership experiences have equipped you for the District Trustee role?**

I am fortunate to have had a variety of leadership experiences that have prepared me for the role of District Trustee. Over the past two years, I have gained a deeper appreciation for the importance of organized dentistry, particularly through my involvement in ASDA and its significant impact on dental students.

My leadership journey has included serving in multiple roles at the chapter and district levels. I began as Advocacy Chair, later transitioning to Touro Executive Treasurer, and I currently serve as District 2 Events Chair. Each position has enhanced my ability to contribute meaningfully to ASDA's mission.

I've leveraged my prior corporate consulting experience to excel in these roles. I am skilled at balancing independent decision-making with effective delegation to ensure tasks are completed

efficiently. I pride myself on being prompt, detail-oriented, and maintaining strong professional relationships.

One of my proudest accomplishments was revitalizing Touro's Vendor Fair, which had not occurred in three years. By fostering relationships with sponsors and vendors, I secured participation from 17 vendors—setting a new record for the event. This success reflects my commitment to innovation and collaboration in advancing ASDA initiatives.

These experiences have taught me the value of strategic planning, effective communication, and fostering community engagement—all of which I would bring to the District Trustee role.

**Why are you interested in the District Trustee role and what do you hope to accomplish in this position?**

During my time in ASDA, I have come to appreciate the importance of organized dentistry and the profound impact it has—not only on us as students but also on the future of our profession. ASDA has given me the opportunity to grow as a leader, advocate for my peers, and contribute to meaningful change. The District Trustee role represents an opportunity for me to continue supporting dental students and advancing ASDA's mission on a broader scale.

One of my key goals as Trustee is to strengthen communication and organization across all chapters. District 2 is uniquely positioned, comprising all New York dental schools, many of which are in close proximity. This presents a great opportunity for collaboration, resource-sharing, and mentorship. I want to establish a platform where students can voice their concerns while also ensuring they feel comfortable reaching out to me to represent them at the national level.

With the support of my cabinet, I aim to foster greater collaboration among chapters, particularly by improving access to guest speakers, leadership training, and mentorship programs. By working alongside the New York State Dental Association and the ADA's district representatives, we can bridge the gap between students and organized dentistry, ensuring they have the guidance and resources needed for professional success.

If elected, I plan to leverage my experience in advocacy, relationship-building, and leadership to elevate District 2. I am committed to ensuring that our district thrives, remains engaged, and continues to empower the next generation of dental professionals.

**What are 2-3 issues important to dental students?**

As I have learned over the past 3 years, dental students today face several challenges that impact their education and well-being. Two major issues that stand out to me are student debt and mental health.

The financial burden faced by dental school remains one of the biggest for students. With the rising cost of tuition and the cost of living, I believe that financial literacy is of the utmost importance. I understand every student has a different scenario, but I want to use my term as trustee to show students different avenues on how to deal with debt and to improve financial literacy among all students to take away the fear of being in debt so that they can continue to strive as they move onto the professional world. Advocating for lower interest rates, expanded loan forgiveness programs, and financial planning education can help ease this burden and set students up for long-term success.

Burnout is a serious issue in dental school. Having experienced it myself, I know how easy it is to neglect self-care while managing clinical responsibilities, board exams, and personal commitments. As Trustee, I will prioritize wellness initiatives, mental health resources, and stress management programs to better support students. As Trustee, I am committed to addressing these challenges and ensuring that every student has the support and resources they need to thrive.