

## ***District 6***

***Miguel Ortiz Gonzalez, Meharry 2026***

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

When working with a team, I believe it's essential to establish clear expectations and define the common goals we want to achieve together. Every task can be approached from various perspectives, and recognizing the value of diversity in problem-solving can significantly enhance the overall effectiveness of a team.

As a leader, I focus on identifying each team member's strengths and assigning tasks that allow them to excel. I believe people do their best work when they feel supported and are given roles that align with their abilities. At the same time, it's important to maintain realistic expectations and be ready to step in whenever assistance is needed. Leadership is not just about delegation—it's about collaboration and knowing when to lend a helping hand to ensure the team's success.

I also understand that everyone has their own way of working. My goal is to create an environment where team members feel empowered to achieve objectives in their own way, as long as we meet deadlines and adhere to any established guidelines. A good leader fosters trust, flexibility, and accountability, and I strive to embody these qualities while learning and growing with my team. Ultimately, teamwork is about collective success, and I see leadership as an opportunity to support and uplift others while working toward shared goals.

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

Most recently, I was elected president-elect of the ASDA chapter at my school. This role comes with significant responsibilities, including meeting with and delegating tasks. Balancing these duties with the schedule of dental school has been challenging but also rewarding. One of the key skills I've developed is finding an effective approach to support students to succeed.

As part of my role, I've been tasked with organizing events for the school. To accomplish this, I rely on collaboration with members of our e-board. My favorite part of the process is identifying each person's strengths and aligning their roles with their interests. This often involves open communication and collaboration to ensure everyone feels supported and their efforts align with the larger vision. I've learned that clear communication of expectations and actively listening to others are essential for getting engagement. Of course, unforeseen challenges arise, and when they do, I step in to fill gaps and ensure everything runs smoothly.

In addition to my role as president-elect, I have also served as the treasurer at the district level. Managing the finances for District 4 required a high level of responsibility and attention to detail. With this role I have made myself available to answer questions, provide assistance, and

maintain finances, ensuring we stayed within budget while supporting the success of all e-board members. I've never hesitated to seek guidance or opinions when needed, which helped me make informed decisions and better support my team.

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

My interest in the District Trustee role grew as I worked closely with our current trustee. Observing the responsibilities and impact of the role, I realized it's about more than organizing conferences—it's about creating meaningful change and ensuring students' voices are heard. This inspires me to pursue the position.

One of my earliest dental school memories is meeting Christina Aponte, a past trustee. She shared how much ASDA meant to her and credited it with shaping her path. Her words motivated me to get involved, first at the local chapter level and then at the district level. Through this, I realized the trustee role aligns with my experiences and aspirations. It's a chance to grow, collaborate, and contribute to ASDA on a larger scale.

As trustee, I hope to foster camaraderie within the e-board as we transition districts, support my peers in achieving their goals, and create an environment where everyone reflects on their experience with pride. I also aim to advance ASDA's mission of advocacy and leadership, shaping a profession that benefits both students and the communities we serve.

This role offers the opportunity to grow personally and professionally. By working on initiatives that impact organized dentistry and attending meetings that influence our profession's future, I can become a better clinician and advocate. Helping shape the way we practice would be the most rewarding part of this role.

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

One of the most pressing concerns for dental students is the rising cost of dental education. With tuition and the cost of living increasing at similar rates, many students struggle to manage their financial burden while pursuing their dream of becoming a dentist. This raises the question: is the rise in tuition making people avoid a future in dentistry? Students often seek clarity and support on how to justify and manage these costs, as well as how to make their education more accessible without compromising its quality.

Another issue is the growing emphasis on General Practice Residencies (GPRs) and Advanced Education in General Dentistry (AEGD) programs as potential new standards for determining whether a graduate is fit to practice dentistry. Some states have already adopted policies requiring these post-doctoral programs to be able to practice. This trend raises concerns about the adequacy of pre-doctoral training. After investing so much in their education, dental

students want to ensure that their pre-doctoral training provide the skills necessary to enter the profession confidently. Many feel that gaps in their training make them consider post-doctoral programs, even if they have passed licensure and board exams.