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Head of the Class

Rutan & Tucker partner William Marticorena works to keep his former high school running.

By Shane Nelson

Daily Journal Staff Writer

Orange County litigator William Marticorena doesn't want his former high school to fail. "My mantra is, 'It's not going to happen on my watch,'" the Rutan & Tucker LLP partner said.

Frequently shoulder-deep in the full-time obligations of his government and regulatory practice, Marticorena also handles day-to-day operations at the Don Bosco Technical Institute in Rosemead, where he's been interim head of the all-male Catholic high school since last May.

"I have two full-time jobs," he said with a chuckle. "There's no way around it."

In Recess

A 1970 Bosco alumnus, Marticorena reluctantly joined the school's board of trustees in 2014 and worried then about whether he'd have sufficient time for even that limited commitment. He ended up taking over as chairman last spring after his predecessor stepped down because of health concerns. And when Bosco's president announced plans to step aside soon after, again due to health concerns, the board decided Marticorena would be the best temporary stand-in while a new head of school administration was sought.

"We wanted to spend some time to make sure we brought in the right person," Marticorena said. "Originally, we talked about six months. ... Obviously, it's lasting longer than six months."

Marticorena figures he'll continue as Bosco's interim head of school likely through the end of this year, maintaining his schedule of most Mondays and Fridays actually on campus, while fielding countless school-related emails and phone calls throughout his workweek at Rutan.

Along with the institution's prin-

cipal in charge of Bosco's academic concerns, Marticorena described himself as the face of the school, meeting regularly with outside officials and prospective donors while handling everyday administrative challenges.

"I'm the person who keeps the trains running on time," he said. "And that involves everything from HR to finance to physical plant management."

Marticorena has also been instrumental in reshaping Bosco's board of trustees, replacing what had been a collection of older alumni with younger individuals from a variety of backgrounds, a change aimed at reinvigorating the governing body with broader perspective.

Suzanne Harrell, chair of the board's financial committee for two years now, began working with Marticorena more than two decades ago on governmental financial matters. Marticorena convinced the longtime financial adviser she'd be a terrific addition to the collection of trustees. Harrell said her friend's leadership has been keenly focused since then on shaping a successful future for the school.

"Bill is one of the smartest people I know," she said. "He'll just attack any problem and always finds a solution, ... and I think he's just done a fantastic job."

Bosco Tech was home to more than 1,100 students when Marticorena graduated in 1970, but that academic population has declined dramatically, a trend encountered by many Catholic private schools across the nation, according to Marticorena. Bosco's enrollment suffered even further, however, during the great recession and hasn't recovered since. Today, the school has around 385 students.

"The real goal right now is to expand student enrollment," Marticorena said. "To function on a longterm, financially sound basis, we need about 600 students."

Financially independent from the



Juliane Backmann / Special to the Daily Journal

"I have tow full-time jobs." says Rutan & Tucker LLP litigator William Marticorena.

Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Los Angeles, Bosco Tech opened in 1955 and offers students a college-preparatory curriculum combined with project-based technical learning in areas such as computer science, electrical engineering, media arts and technology, and architecture.

Marticorena is excited about a recent push from Bosco leadership to add a premed and health sciences project-based learning focus in 2020. He also said offering a more robust curriculum — one more in line with some of the school's major competition in Los Angeles — should help attract more students. Elective options such as Mandarin and Advanced Placement biology will be added next fall as well as a longtime private school staple, Latin.

"I was appalled when I got here and learned we were a Catholic school that wasn't offering Latin," Marticorena said, laughing. "That certainly wouldn't have happened in my days."

Marticorena grew up in East Los Angeles' City Terrace and in Monterey Park. His father was an auto mechanic and his mother worked on an assembly line.

"There certainly was no privilege there," he explained, "and my parents struggled just to send me to Bosco Tech."

Planning initially to be a chemist, Marticorena's early days at the high school exposed him to a future he hadn't considered.

"I was introduced to the speech and debate club, and my whole life changed," he recalled, noting that he competed all four years for the team. "As soon as I was immersed in debate at Bosco, I knew I wasn't going to be a chemist. I was going to be a lawyer."

Manuel L. Franco, one of Marticorena's classmates in the late 1960s and a current trustee on the board, confirmed his friend was a star on the school's debate team and a strong stand-in during the recent search for a new school president.

"Even though he's only there just once or twice a week, he's really helped," said Franco, whose parents also worked hard to pay Bosco's tuition. "And we both really want to make sure we give young boys like us the opportunity to be leaders tomorrow."

Describing his commitment to Bosco as "simultaneously the most frustrating and the most rewarding thing I have ever done," Marticorena noted that the school's population draws primarily from East LA and is about 65 to 70 percent Latino. Nearly 70 percent of the school's students also receive financial aid, he said.

Passionate about providing these young men with a promising tomorrow, Marticorena is confident Bosco Tech is on the right track today.

"I have no doubt that my work, and the work of the people who've come in with me, is pushing the school toward a much healthier future," he said. "And that is very, very fulfilling."