Talent Tells Tale of New Era in OC

It can be hard to recognize an era while it’s happening. Keep that in mind and ponder whether OC has entered a new era of bolstering its professional and intellectual depth in ways that hit squarely upon or cross paths with the community of business here. A squadron of talent has arrived in OC lately, starting with the return of Finbarr O’Neill, who led Fountain Valley-based Hyundai Motor America from also-ran to up-and-comer a decade ago. O’Neill recently became boss of J.D. Power and Associates, which now keeps its HQ in the South Coast Metro district … UCI’s law school chipped in with a quartet of decorated professors recruited from Harvard, NYU, the University of Michigan and Yeshiva University … It helps to have some carrots to dangle when recruiting top talent, and Paul and Marybelle Musco will make sure Chapman U has a big one to offer candidates for its top job—starting with Daniele Struppa, newly inaugurated president of the school in Orange. The Muscos are the benefactors set to donate a home in Big Canyon as a presidential residence for the school in perpetuity … The Diocese of Or-
ange, meanwhile, appointed Pia de Solenni—
who graduated summa cum laude with a
doctorate in sacred theology from the Pontifi-
cal University of the Holy Cross in Rome—
as its first theological consultant ... The trend
toward deeper talent pools grows outward from
OC, too—the Insider hears that Costa Mesa-
based law firm Greenberg Gross will launch
an office in downtown L.A., with recently hired
securities trial lawyer Howard Privette as
managing partner. Aluyah Inoisili, a star litig-
gator whose victories include a $40 million
jury verdict, more recently left a spot with
white-shoe Milbank Tweed for a partner’s slot
with Greenberg Gross in L.A. ... Plenty of
depth when Asian Women Entrepreneurs
gathered last month for the group’s annual
scholarship luncheon at Anaheim White
House Restaurant. AWE scored with emcee
Marissa Pei, a Seal Beach resident who’s gain-
ing a reputation as the “Asian Oprah” and
showed why while handing out scholarships to
local college students, and Lotus Awards to
Ouyen Tu, founder of B Corp Law Center in
Anaheim, and Tina Guilder Chen, CEO of Virtus Phar-
maceuticals Inc. ... The In-
sider hears the OC sports scene
could add some depth if the Big
West Conference decides to
complement its post-season
basketball tournaments at the
Honda Center with something
similar for other sports at the $250 million
worth of fields and facilities under development by FivePoint Holdings at Great Park in Irvine ... The San Clemente-based Hispanic 100 showed how to recognize talent and flex some sociopolitical muscle at last week’s annual gala at the Balboa Bay Resort, when it gave a Lifetime Achievement Award to Lou Diamond Phillips, a helping hand to a handful of hardworking youngsters, and a chance for much of OC’s political class to pay respects ... The event also showed that even the most talented among us can benefit from a home-field advantage—an autographed baseball from Angels slugger Albert Pujols went from $75 to $100 as the silent-auction bidding came to a close, while one from Dodgers rookie sensation Corey Seager went from $25 to $35. ... Turn to page 1 for Deirdre Newman’s report on how Steve Craig scouts promising rookies of the retail and restaurant world for a pipeline of talent that stretches from Missouri to OC.