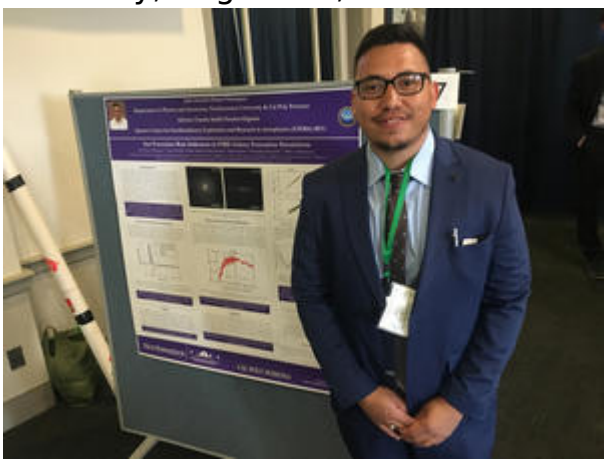
Mourning the loss Ph.D. Student José Flores Velázquez

Thursday, August 15, 2019



Dear Physical Sciences community,

I write with a heavy heart to share that Physics & Astronomy Ph.D. student José Flores Velázquez was shot and killed in a drive-by shooting last night near his family home in Los Angeles. This is a tremendous loss for his family, friends, community and all of us here at UC Irvine and beyond.

José was an incredibly promising student in astrophysics and was a rising star in his field. He held a prestigious NSF Graduate Research Fellowship and just earlier this week, gave an outstanding scientific talk on galaxy formation to an audience of international researchers. José was quite special, both because he was brilliant and because he was genuinely a sweet soul, a nice person who everyone liked. As his Ph.D. advisor, I can testify that we were fortunate he came to UCI to pursue his Ph.D.

Prior to coming to UC Irvine, José graduated Cum Laude in Physics from Cal Poly Pomona. He conducted summer research at Harvard and Northwestern University and presented his research all over the country including on Capitol Hill. He came to UCI in 2018 through the Cal-Bridge program, which helps promising students from underserved backgrounds earn advanced degrees in physics and astronomy.

José was such a joy and source of inspiration to many of us. He loved his family and went home on the weekends to spend time with them. We have received calls of support from every institution he touched; José was the kind of person who left places better than he found them. This is certainly true of UC Irvine.

We want to offer our deepest condolences and support to José's family and friends during this trying time. José's undergraduate advisor has set up a gofundme page for his memorial for anyone who would like to contribute in his honor: https://www.gofundme.com/f/funeral-for-jose-flores-velazquez

The UCI Counseling Center is available for students who would like support and the UCI Employee Assistance Program is available for faculty and staff.

Best wishes and support during this difficult time.

James Bullock
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