

# UCSB Student Killed by Fall

## Early Thanksgiving Morning

### Two 22-year-old Students Fall From Balcony on Cordoba

by THOMAS ALEXANDER  
*Isla Vista Beat Reporter*

Two 22-year-old students sustained injuries after falling off of an apartment balcony on the 6500 block of Cordoba Road early Thanksgiving morning. Melissa Portillo, a UCSB student, sustained blunt force trauma to the head and died shortly after at Santa Barbara Cottage hospital, while Michael Kuster, a friend of Portillo’s, remained in stable condition at the hospital as of Thursday morning.

Portillo, who originally hailed from Los Angeles, was celebrating her 22nd birthday with friends at the time of the incident. A Sheriff’s Department spokesman stated that the falls were an accident, and said that investigators do not suspect foul play, although he mentioned that alcohol may have been involved. Both 22-year-olds fell over a second-story railing at the top of the exterior stairs to the apartment complex.

When police responded to the scene at approximately 12:58 a.m. on Thursday morning, they found Portillo unresponsive and Kuster complaining of pain to his head and back; both fall victims were rushed to Santa Barbara Cottage Hospital for immediate emergency medical care. Kuster’s condition was stabilized and Portillo was pronounced dead shortly after her arrival.

Portillo’s family was notified in person by Los Angeles

police personnel.

Friends describe Portillo as a bright and hardworking individual who was devoted to her work and to her relationships.

“She would always be walking around with a huge smile and was extremely outgoing to anyone who crossed her path,” explained a friend and former co-worker who wished to remain anonymous. “When you worked a shift with her, the time flew by.”

One of Portillo’s housemates, Teddy Lee, explained that she was a dedicated worker who was finishing classes at UCSB for graduation.

“I admired her hard work—she was always waking up at like 4 a.m. to get ready for work,” said Lee, who went on to explain that she “wasn’t a privileged student, and it’s so sad she had to leave at such a young age.”

Lee asserted that regardless of the circumstances of Portillo’s death, she and other students in similar situations should be remembered for their passions and their personalities, not for the fact that they partied.

“The fact is so many students drink and party,” explained Lee. “It’s normalized and Melissa shouldn’t be solely known for that fact. I always saw a kind-hearted, beautiful young woman who had such an extreme devotion to her family and friends.”

No memorials are planned locally at this time.

### Student Tuition Fees, Taxpayer Money Not Going to Big Banks, Contrary to Student Report

by ANNALISE DOMENIGHINI  
*Executive Managing Editor*

Student tuition and state money from Proposition 30 will be going to pay for debt incurred by University of California medical centers, according to a recent study by graduate students in UC Berkeley’s sociology department.

The 14-page report, “Swapping our Future: How Students and Taxpayers are Funding Risky UC Borrowing and Wall Street Profits,” details how banks like Deutsche Bank and Bank of America are profiting from interest rate swap deals made by UC when taking out bonds for UC Davis, UC Los Angeles and UC San Francisco medical centers.

The report states that “UC management has more than doubled the university’s debt burden from \$6.9 billion in May 2007 to \$14.3 billion at the end of 2011... UC borrowing is often backed by student tuition, but profits on debt-funded investments have not been used to mitigate service cuts or tuition hikes...UC is currently losing about three-quarters of a million dollars each month on interest rate swaps associated with debt issued for two of its medical centers.”

“UC management has doubled UC debt between 2007-2011, not to invest in the UC mission but to invest in out-of-state enrollment and lucrative medical services that aren’t necessarily in the public interest,” said Charlie Eaton, a graduate student in sociology at UC Berkeley and a co-author of the report.

“When UC borrows this money, they borrow against tuition. Students take on all of the risk. When we have losses on the bets, students pay the price. But when there are returns, none of those returns are seen by the students.”

The report directly analyzes interest rate swaps that UC entered into in 2007, before the market crash of 2008 and 2009. When UCLA medical center was looking to take out loans for the seismic retrofitting of some of its buildings, the center took out bonds, or loans, to pay for those retrofits. The university weighed two choices of interest rates to pay on these bonds: a fixed rate bond at the start of the borrowing or a fixed rate through a variable interest rate swap. In the end, the university chose the fixed rate bond, which is a bond that stays the same over the course

see SWAPS | page 4

#### the STORIES

Victor Balbuena:



Victor Balbuena, who works at Subway locations on Pardall and Calle Real. Balbuena and his two sons were forced to evict their apartment He takes with him two young sons who were raised on the property.

Lorena Garcia:



Lorena Garcia was evicted from her Embaradero Del Norte home after nearly 17 years of residence. Garcia and her husband are now living out of a garage.

Pictured Right:  
The photos to the right were provided by Jorge Avila of the condition of his 781 Embarcadero Del Norte unit during his residence. Numerous tenants said that much construction was done on their homes without notice while they were still occupying them.

## Isla Vista Families Forcibly Evicted

by KELSEY GRIPENSTRAW  
*Executive Content Editor*

Lorena Garcia called 781 Embarcadero Del Norte home for almost 17 years.

Garcia and her 84-year-old husband, who has Alzheimer’s, now live out of a garage. They were uprooted from their Isla Vista home in May when Platler Capital Management, a San Clemente-based company, acquired ownership of their apartment complex at Embarcadero Del Norte.

Garcia said that it affected her health and caused her anxiety. Though she told their landlord that she would pay any additional rent, he still required that they leave.

Victor Balbuena, who works at Subway locations in Isla Vista and Goleta, said that he and his 9-year-old and 12-year-old sons, whom he raised at the property, were traumatized by the situation. After giving them a 60-day lease termination, Platler, who declined to comment for this story, would repeatedly pound on their door and demand that they leave before they were required to.

Platler took ownership of Balbuena and Garcia’s property on April 27, gave notice that he was raising rent by 10 percent on May 1, and then proceeded to evict several tenants at a time on a gradual basis. Eleven tenants have come forward to Associated Students Isla Vista Tenants Union who have received termination notices, and seven of them have moved out of 781 Embarcadero Del Norte. The tenants who have been evicted could now be entitled to up to \$10,500 per unit, according to Robin Unander, the attorney representing the tenants.

“The landlord has agreed to allow three units to remain at the premises at an increased rent in remodeled units,” said Unander.

Unander said that because construction was conducted while the tenants were still living in their homes, they should be able to be partially re-

see EVICTIONS | page 2



Photos Courtesy of | Isla Vista Tenants Union

5 Questions With a Storke Tower Musician  
see page 3

2012 Word of the Year: GIF  
see page 5

Marijuana Legalized in Two States  
see page 5

One Direction’s New Abum  
see page 6

Examining Caffeine and College Students  
see page 8