



## New Tec dean seeks to combine design with social transformation

**Mariana Amatullo**, the new Dean of the **School of Architecture, Art and Design** (EAAD), began her tenure with a tour of [Tec de Monterrey](#) campuses to get to know them and to listen.

With a **career** spanning **three continents** and more than two decades in the academic world, **Amatullo** brings a **multidisciplinary perspective** on the transformative role of design in contemporary society.

Although she arrives with plans and ideas she wants to implement, her **priority over these first few weeks is to get to know students** and the opportunities and challenges they're currently facing.



## UAn international educational background

Born into a diplomatic family in **Buenos Aires, Argentina**, Amatullo developed a **global and adaptable mindset** from an early age.

*“Throughout my lifetime, I’ve always experienced many changes, both on a personal level and later on a professional level, ever since I was a child,”* the new dean reflected during her visit to Monterrey.

The dean **grew up all over the world**, from Switzerland to the United States and France.

This **multicultural experience** became the foundation of her **educational and professional philosophy**, fostering the **curiosity** she now sees as **essential to her career**.

Her academic background also reflects this diversity.

She began studying **Literature** at the **Sorbonne and the École du Louvre** in France, earned an M.A. in Art History and Museum Studies from the **University of Southern California**, and holds a Ph.D. in Management from **Case Western Reserve University**.

The academic's professional career began as a curator at major museums in Los Angeles, but her destiny changed when she arrived at the **ArtCenter College of Design** in Pasadena, California.

*"I was missing that **impactful connection** that you have as an academic and as an educator,"* she explains about her transition to design pedagogy.

It was at **ArtCenter** that she co-founded **Designmatters**, a pioneering initiative that revolutionized the way we understand **design as a tool for social change**.

During her 17 years at the institution, she developed over **100 international projects**, making the school the first in the United States to be granted **NGO status by the United Nations**.

One of her favorite projects from the *Designmatters* initiative was a collaboration with **Fundación Coaniquem**, in Chile, working with children who have suffered burn injuries and their families.

The students designed a **communication campaign** starring "**Santi**," a mischievous cat who helped prevent household accidents.

This project evolved and was implemented in **clinical spaces**, creating more humane and less intimidating environments for young patients.

She uses that campaign as an example of how design has the potential to impact the **Sustainable Development Goals** defined by the United Nations.



## Her strategic vision for the Tec

After eight years as a professor of Strategy and Design at **Parsons School of Design** in New York, and serving as Vice Provost for Continuing Education at The New School, Amatullo joined Tec de Monterrey, drawn by the institution's international vision and commitment to social transformation.

How the Tec had positioned itself to grow in these areas across Mexico, based on an international perspective, as well as its **ambition for excellence**, were decisive elements in her decision.

Her **priorities** as dean are focused on **three main areas**:

- First, **strengthening** the school's **research and graduate ecosystem**.
- Second, **consolidating academic excellence** among both students and faculty, while maintaining the international perspective that characterizes the Tec.
- Third, **developing strategic partnerships** that enable graduates to have the best professional opportunities.

***“I always say it’s the students that keep me honest and relevant.” - Mariana Amatullo***

These commitments align with the dean’s vision of the **school’s ideal graduate profile**, which is focused on two core competencies: **critical thinking** and **creative confidence**.

*“You have to have critical thinking skills to be able to **question the solutions** we have access to,”* she explains, something especially relevant in an era when **artificial intelligence** presents both opportunities and challenges.

The second skill she hopes to foster relates to students’ **confidence in their own creativity**.

*“It’s important to work in ambiguous situations and **make decisions**,”* she says.

Amatullo sees this as essential for Tec graduates to address the **current challenges** facing the **design world** and the **uncertainty** we’re currently experiencing.



## A message for students of presence and curiosity

Her advice for students reflects her **life philosophy**: *“Be **confident**. Be **curious**. Ask lots of questions and **truly be present** in the moment.”*

The academic emphasizes the importance of **making the most of the university experience** as a unique period for exploration and building meaningful relationships.

*“Being a student is a magical time,”* she says, noting that the connections made during these years will last long after graduation.

Even with her appointment as dean, Amatullo **doesn’t want to lose her connection** with students and the day-to-day job of **teaching**.

Since her time as Vice Provost at Parsons, the dean has striven to **teach at least one course per year**.

*“I always say **it’s the students that keep me honest and relevant**,”* she explains.

She hopes to continue that **commitment at the Tec**.

For her, students are an **important source of inspiration** for teachers to train future designers, architects, and artists capable of tackling major challenges with **creativity, academic rigor, and social commitment**.

**ALSO READ:**