



Tec's COVID strategy: global multicultural classes without traveling

Taking **classes** with **people from other countries** without traveling by using **technology** is a strategy that **will strengthen [Tec de Monterrey's](#) partnerships** for **international presence** in the **post-COVID era**, said **David Garza** in a panel discussion with **Latin American university leaders**.

Tec de Monterrey's rector and executive president participated in the panel entitled "**The Future of International Education: Perspectives on Leadership in Latin America**", organized by the **[University of California at Davis \(UC Davis\)](#)** and the **[Institute of International Education \(IIE\)](#)**.

Garza accepted that the **crisis** caused by the pandemic has been a **challenge** for **universities**, which is why some of the organization's **strategies** to **confront** it have been to **strengthen ties** with other institutions, and **to make effective use of technology**.

One of these strategies that the Tec has been developing is the **Global Classroom**, which offers students virtual **international experiences**.

The FUTURE of International Education
Leadership Perspectives from Around the World

Leadership Perspectives from Latin America

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 Pontificia Universidad Católica de Chile
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UC DAVIS
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“We believe that international ties will become more complicated, but also much more relevant. Today, more than ever, we have to change how we think about ourselves to be able to collaborate, share experiences, and develop the synergies that will be crucial for development narratives,” he shared.

*“We started developing a program that we call the **Global Classroom**, which includes extracurricular subjects in digital formats to provide international opportunities to our students or to students from other countries,”* he added.

Alongside Garza on the panel (the last of a series of five) were Ignacio Sánchez, rector of the [Pontifical Catholic University of Chile](#) and Soraya Smaili, rector of the [Federal University of Sao Paulo](#), Brazil. The moderator was Gary May, the UC Davis chancellor.

In the talk, the rectors shared **strategies** which they have put in place at their **universities** so as to continue offering their students international experiences during the **COVID-19** pandemic, as well as their perspectives on the new normal.



AN INTERNATIONAL EXPERIENCE WITHOUT LEAVING HOME

Garza explained that the **Global Classroom** program consists of **virtual sessions** with students and teachers from different parts of the world.

He said that the **virtual student exchange program** is not just about taking distance-learning classes in another country, but that there are **elements** for **learning** about **other cultures** and even **socializing** with people from different parts of the world.

*“This digital experience is an important part of our new portfolio: it includes the **design** and **development** of different courses. It also allows us to **highlight the cultural contexts and realities of the countries involved**,”* he explained.

The Tec’s executive president shared the program’s details with his Latin American peers, as he believes that it will have **benefits** for both **faculty** and **students**.

*“For faculty, in terms of **designing their courses**, in their **interaction with colleagues** not only because they’re from other countries, but also because of the **different perspectives** they provide on the subject they are going to teach, and also by having **students** from different parts of the world in their classes.*

*“And the students have the fact that they can **build relationships** with students from other places in their **curriculum area**: some of them even make **plans to visit them**,” said Garza.*

AN INTERNATIONAL PRESENCE: WHAT MAKES THE TEC DIFFERENT

Garza emphasized that **60 percent** of [Tec de Monterrey](#) students graduate having had at least one **international experience**.

*“For us, an international outlook has always been part of the strategy (...) we emphasize academic experiences that develop a **global mindset**,” he added.*

He noted that the **Tec** represents about **2% of higher education in Mexico**. However, the university contributes between **20 and 30% of international mobility** for students entering and leaving the country.

He added that the institution has had to make **policy changes** due to the pandemic and offer quick alternatives to the **students** who are currently on **exchange**.

Likewise, nearly **a thousand foreign students** who were studying at the Tec received the necessary **support** to be able to **finish** their courses.

“We must remember that an international presence goes far beyond exchanges. It’s about research, the development of talent, and the improvement of our visions as institutions,” he mentioned.

IN SEARCH OF NEW PARTNERSHIPS

The Tec’s rector is currently exploring forming **new partnerships** in the region.

*“We’re considering California, Texas, Arizona, and institutions in Mexico who could be interesting **partners** with whom to create a **consortium of universities** with common interests and a special importance.”*

He emphasized that there are already **partnerships** with institutions in the **US and Latin America**, such as **La Tríada**, a partnership with the [Pontifical Catholic University of Chile](#) and the [University of the Andes](#) in Colombia. The Tec is currently working with both institutions on more than **50 different research projects**.

In addition, Tec is part of **university networks** such as [U21](#) (led by UC Davis) and participates in international programs such as the [UN Sustainable Development Goals](#) program.

He also mentioned that technology has been an important part of guaranteeing **academic continuity** at the Tec, through **synchronous and asynchronous classes**, and by using **new assessment methods**. As a result, the **next semester** will begin digitally and then move to a hybrid model.

It was after the arrival of **COVID-19** in Mexico that the Tec moved from **in-person classes to digital formats**. By training teachers and using technology, emergency remote teaching became a [model for distance learning](#).

THE TEC’S ROLE IN THE POST-COVID WORLD

*“We live in a region with many challenges such as poverty and low productivity, and **universities are going to have a key role** to play when the **health, economic and socio-political crises** are over,”* said Garza.

The rector pointed out that during the pandemic crises, the **Tec** focused on 4 [post-COVID responsibilities](#):

1. Providing a sense of **purpose, hope, and confidence** to students, teachers, and the community
2. **Facing the health crisis** internally and externally through its healthcare system ([TecSalud](#))

3. Guaranteeing **academic continuity**, with all the complexity this entails as a university system with 26 campuses across Mexico and focusing on an **eventual return** to in-person activities

4. Paying **attention to the future**, being more **enterprising** to contribute to the construction of the **new normal**

*“Today, more than ever, **universities** play an **important role** on an international level. We must not allow our current lockdown (due to the pandemic) to distract us from our responsibility for educating the **future citizens of the world**,”* said Garza.

*“We come from different origins, regions and cultures, but we need to focus on maintaining **international education** as part of our responsibility as **global educators**,”* he concluded.

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