

5 ways to build a student-centered educational ecosystem



How can you ensure that **young people**, regardless of where they're from or their social status, can **strive for a better future**?

According to **Paul LeBlanc**, who's considered one of America's leading educational innovators, higher education institutions should create ecosystems that allow their students to excel on their own terms.

*"The **nature of work** is changing across the board - journalism, music, or technology, for example - and we have to look at what needs to be done for universities to equip students with the necessary skills for their career success,"* said **LeBlanc**.

As part of the **Tec's International Conference on Educational Innovation (CIIE for its initials in Spanish)**, the President of **Southern New Hampshire University** shared aspects that will enable students to be placed at the **center of education**.



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1. Bridge gaps in access to technology

LeBlanc points out that the **pandemic has accelerated changes in education**, transforming much of it from inside the classroom to a hybrid or online format, occasionally creating **gaps in access** for some students.

*“Access to **tablets, computers**, that ability to connect is important.*

“During the pandemic, there were students who were connected at 2 or 3 o’clock in the morning. That was the only time it was quiet in their apartment, and there was only one computer they could use,” says LeBlanc.

Actions the teacher says should be **encouraged** include **initiatives to guarantee access** or even **projects to acquire resources** for **students** without computers.

2. Give young people flexibility

*“**Online education** can give people more **flexibility**. Some of them even have to work to support their families,” said LeBlanc.*

Given the increase in **distance learning**, Paul says that **online education** can be an **opportunity** to those who can’t study in a face-to-face format. However, it does bring other **learning challenges**.

*“We have to make sure teachers understand that (online classes) are different to **teaching inside the classroom**,” says LeBlanc, adding that teachers should **redesign** some of their **models** to ensure **learning**.*

3. Think about the person and their emotional needs

LeBlanc says that **Mexico** is experiencing a **mental health crisis**, which is why he advises **teachers** to contemplate this area in the **education** offered to students.

*“In a call with a student, your first question shouldn’t be ‘How is your **assignment** going?’ or ‘How are your **studies** coming along?’ but rather: ‘**How are you?**’ **How is your family?** **Are you okay?**”*

*“Many **students** aren’t okay, and you can help them **solve that problem first**,” LeBlanc said.*

He added that it’s important to know about the **resources available** to send students to **professionals** if they are needed.



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4. Evolve the way of teaching

LeBlanc notes that **teachers** must understand the way **online teaching** and **learning** works.

*“You can’t just **do the same thing** you did in the **classroom** now that you’re online. It’s a different world.*

*“In each **industry**, we have to **re-learn**, and education is no exception,” he says.*

He also invited teachers to choose to leave the comfort zone of their classes and way of teaching and instead choose **innovation**.

5. Reach out to colleagues who are liked by their students

LeBlanc suggests reaching out to **colleagues** who are already **asking interesting questions in the classroom and who are appreciated by their students**.

*“Take the **time to get to know your colleagues** and what they’re **doing**. Observing them, sitting in their class to see what they’re doing is one of the **best ways of learning**,”* he says.

Although some **universities** have **learning centers** and **processes** for teachers, LeBlanc believes the best way to learn is through **informal learning**.

*“We normally **learn by watching**. We have many **studies** showing that students prefer to go ask a classmate rather than a teacher. I think it’s better **to learn in an informal way**,”* he concluded.



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The eighth annual CIIE from Tec de Monterrey

This is the **eighth [International Congress on Educational Innovation](#)** from Tec de Monterrey.

The event takes place **annually**. This time, it was held in a **hybrid way** for 4 days from **December 13 to 16, 2021**.

*“(The **CIIE**) has established itself as an **outstanding space** for the **meeting of professionals** from different parts of the world. We involve everyone who has the **co-responsibility** of creating the future of education,”* said José Escamilla, director of the Institute for the Future of Education at the Tec.

This year, more than **5,000 attendees** participated with the opportunity to listen to discussions and keynotes on **education**.

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