

The life lessons shared by President of MIT during visit to Tec



*“It takes a lot of **luck** and **ability** to do what you think you can’t do. If I say that it’s possible, it’s because I was never the best student in my class in Venezuela. If I could, all of you can.”*

This is how [Dr. Rafael Reif](#), president of the **Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT)**, shared part of his **life story** with students and staff of [Tec de Monterrey](#) during his visit to the Monterrey campus.

Reif was born in **Venezuela** after his parents arrived from Europe. He emigrated to the United States, where he enrolled in school without knowing any English. His resilience led him to study at **Stanford**.

The President of MIT recognized the work of the Tec in **Mexico** and shared **experiences** from his life, as well as his **vision** of the role of universities after the **pandemic**.

*“It’s a great honor to collaborate with Tec de Monterrey because we are truly aligned by having the same vision towards an education that is important to society. **Tecnológico de Monterrey is the MIT of Latin America**,”* said Reif.



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“Education is the only thing you take with you when you leave in a hurry”

Reif participated in a **fireside chat** with **Raúl Rodríguez**, Associate Vice President of Internationalization at the Tec, in the auditorium of the Monterrey campus library.

Reif shared that his parents had emigrated from Europe, **escaping World War II as refugees**, arriving first in **Ecuador**, then moving to **Venezuela**, where he was born.

*“When I was younger, my brother used to tell me that when you have to leave in a hurry, **education is the only thing you can take with you,**”* he recalled.

Later, new challenges would come for Reif who, together with one of his brothers, would study for a **graduate degree in the United States**.

*“When I was younger, my brother used to tell me that when you have to leave in a hurry, **education is the only thing you can take with you.**”*

Despite **not speaking any English**, Reif wrote down what he heard phonetically and then used a dictionary to help him understand it, finding a way to take advantage of that opportunity.

He would later become a **university professor** at **MIT** in the 1980s and be appointed in **2012** as **president of MIT**, which is considered **the best university in the world**.

“You have to be lucky, but you also need to be dedicated,” Reif said.



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The challenges for universities in the future

The President of MIT shared his **vision** on the role of **universities** after the **COVID-19 pandemic** and the **changes** it has brought.

Some of the issues Reif highlighted were online education, better access to education, and providing more opportunities for **disciplined** and **resilient young people** who want to study.

*“The world has changed, and universities are at the heart of it, so it’s our job to investigate the correct way to **solve** the **challenges** that **education** faces today,”* he said.

He also pointed out that **young people** seem to be more **willing** not only to access education to get a better job but also to generate a **positive change** in the world and its challenges such as climate change.

“The world has become much more complicated and nowadays students want to create positive changes in the world.

*“It’s our **responsibility** as **universities** to guide them and give them the necessary tools so that they can be agents of change that have an impact on the future. I’m sure those at the Tec think the same.”*

“Tecnológico de Monterrey is the MIT of Latin America.”

These necessary positive changes have opened the doors to more collaboration between universities **after the pandemic**, Reif said.

*“It’s important to collaborate with other **universities** in the **world**, just as we do with **Tecnológico de Monterrey** since we share the same vision of tackling educational challenges and providing meaningful solutions,” he said.*

Reif also highlighted the **partnership** that has been created between **Tecnológico de Monterrey** and **MIT** during his administration, in which they collaborate on topics such as **research** and **industry 4.0**.

Since 2014, both institutions have worked on **nanotechnology** and **nanoscience** with advances that can be applied in the fields such as **energy**, **electronics**, and **biomedicine**.

In fact, when MIT inaugurated the **MIT.nano** nanoscience building in 2018, it named its **Prototyping Laboratory “Tecnológico de Monterrey,”** enhancing the collaboration between both institutions.

Reif recognized the work of Tec de Monterrey and the impact it aims to have in Latin America.

*“I’ve heard about the **Tec’s plans, ideas, and projects** and I’m impressed. It’s going to be, if it isn’t yet, **the best technological university in Latin America**. Feel proud because you’re going to achieve a lot,” said Reif.*



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The visit of the president of MIT to Tec de Monterrey

The **fireside chat** was part of the **activities** conducted on **March 24** and **25**, 2022.

During his visit to Tec de Monterrey, Reif learned about the progress of some projects and participated in the discussion.

Christine Chomiuk, who accompanied her husband Rafael Reif, also met with directors of the [FEMSA Foundation](#).

Christine met young people from the [Leaders of Tomorrow](#) initiative that offers **scholarships** to cover **100%** of the cost of a university degree to young leaders regardless of their socioeconomic status.



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It has been **eight years** since this program **started** and **1,258 young people** have benefited from it, with 989 current students at 25 campuses and 539 graduates.

“Thank you so much for sharing your stories with me. You’ll be the ones to change the future,” Chomiuk said.

*“You’re an **example** to other **students**. Seeing people like you who managed to succeed on their own merits will be a motivation for other young people. Continue on your journey and I know you’ll achieve your goals,”* said **Eva Garza**, wife of **José Antonio Fernández**, president of **FEMSA** and **Chairman of the Board** at the Tec.

“I also want to share my congratulations and **highlight** what you and **your husband** have **accomplished** on this visit, Christine. He’s an **inspiration** to all of us. He shows us that anything’s possible,” said **Raúl Rodríguez**.



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