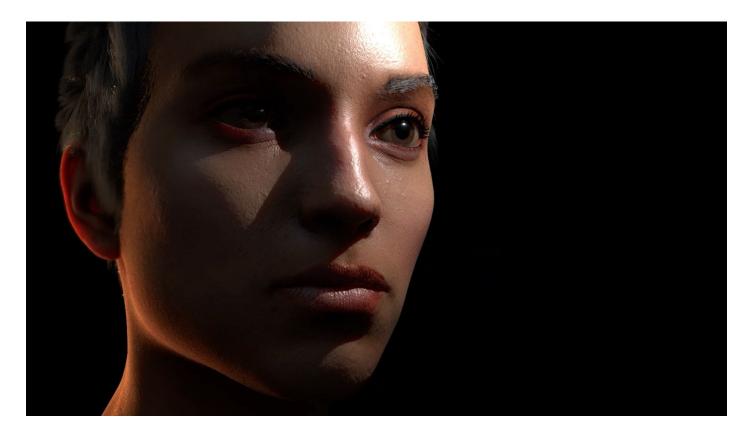
Tec professor receives USD 65,000 from Fortnite creators for startup



Epic Games Inc., which has developed games such as *Fortnite* and *Gears of War*, granted **65,000 dollars** to the startup run by **Carlos Vilchis**, a professor and PhD student at Tec de Monterrey's **State of Mexico campus**.

Through its **Epic MegaGrants program**, the American company seeks to **promote video game**, **film production**, and software development projects.

"This cash injection enabled us to turn our startup <u>'Eugenia'</u> into a technological research and development company for digital humans," shared Carlos.

Video game and movie development has increased the **demand** for **digital human software**, which consists of avatars created by artificial intelligence that are capable of **gesturing**, making eye contact, and **reacting by emulating empathy with their surroundings**, the professor explained.

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Digital humans

<u>'Eugenia'</u> forms part of Professor Vilchis' **PhD research**, which focuses on improving understanding of **how the faces of digital humans behave** by using **motion capture** technology for facial recognition.

"Receiving the 65,000 dollars allowed us to scale Eugenia's research capacity and development.

"We hired two students from the Tec's master's degree in Artificial Intelligence and an Animation and Digital Art degree graduate, as well as helping another master's student with a brain activity monitoring kit which she needs for her own research," he explained.

Currently, Carlos is in Vancouver, Canada, participating in a research stay at Industrial Light & Magic (ILM), a company founded by George Lucas in 1975.

"They offered me the stay for 6 months. However, they asked me to stay a further 6 months because my research is closely related to the work they do at ILM," he shared.

"We've hired Tec students and graduates with the funds we received."

<u>'Eugenia'</u> has gone from being Carlos' **PhD thesis project** to a research company actively looking for further important **investment opportunities**, as he highlighted:

"Tec de Monterrey has an **artificial intelligence company acceleration program** which, in collaboration with the Jalisco state government, is helping us to find investments worth **2.5 million dollars so we can open an office** in the United States.

"Eugenia has gone from being a PhD project to an entire ecosystem. We're the only company of this kind working in Spanish-speaking countries," he explained.

Fortnite, Lucas Film, Tec CEM width="900" loading="lazy">

Eugenia and the metaverse

Carlos' vision for Eugenia goes far beyond developing hardware for digital human behavior and facial recognition.

"We want to **leverage** the company as a **world-leading** business focused on digital humans. But it goes beyond that: we want to **support people's digital identities** within the **metaverse**.

"Let's say you're **a famous actor**: through Eugenia we can **guarantee** your **individuality** so that you can have an **official version of yourself** in the **metaverse**. It provides a kind of **validation**, just as official **social media** accounts do," he stressed. He also highlighted the work that the Tec is doing in **educating its students**, as the **Motion Capture laboratory** on the State of Mexico campus teaches students how to **produce films virtually.**

"We have drawn the **attention and interest** of companies such as **Netflix Mexico** because this type of industry requires students to use everything they have learned in these **laboratories** for their **virtual productions**," he said.

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Finally, Carlos acknowledged that when he came to Tec de Monterrey as a professor, he discovered an **ecosystem that was very different from that of the universities** where he had previously worked.

"I came to teach but I was constantly invited to participate in other things, the first of which was the PhD. They supported me a lot with my research, so we could hire 4 Tec graduates.

"I'm completing my research stay in Canada and teaching visual effects at the same time. The **Tec believed in me**: it's allowed me to follow my nose and that's what makes it **different** from the **rest**," he concluded.

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