

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 '[Eugenia](#)' 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

'Eugenia' 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."

'Eugenia' 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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