

# Tec Forum: Discussing role of universities in early childhood



What are the challenges of **improving living conditions** for **young children**? What role can universities assume in the **development of children between 0 and 5 years of age**?

These were questions raised by childhood development experts during a panel at the **1st International Early Childhood Forum** hosted by [Tec de Monterrey](#) and the [FEMSA Foundation](#).

This panel included leaders from early childhood centers at universities such as **Harvard, Stanford, and Georgetown** who spoke about the **challenges and working approaches** at their institutions.

The forum was held on November 28 at the Monterrey campus, where the Tec and the FEMSA Foundation also **officially launched the Center for Early Childhood**.



#### **Challenges of early childhood development**

In a discussion moderated by the center's associate director **Adriana Gidi**, Director of the [Stanford](#) Center on Early Childhood **Philip Fisher** spoke about **4 challenges in childhood development**.

*"We've identified 4 specific areas: historically, **research** progresses very slowly; **information** flows in one direction, which entails suppositions about where and how knowledge can be beneficial,"* said Fisher.

*"There's also a need to continue developing **future leadership** in all areas of the early childhood ecosystem; and it's hard **to track how development occurs**, understanding or measuring when a kid is on the right track,"* he added.

The center he runs has implemented **tools to accelerate research**, **greater flow of information** and **interaction with communities**, scholarship programs to **shape leaders**, and **technology-based measurement** strategies.



**Promoting cross-cutting collaboration**

**Neal Horen**, Director of the Early Childhood Division at the [Georgetown University](#) Center for Child and Human Development, mentioned the need to help young children develop in a **coordinated and connected** fashion.

*“At the center, we work on all kinds of topics related to early intervention. We have several centers for training and technical assistance, and we’re **connected to other departments** such as Psychology, Psychiatry, or Education.*

*“It’s our job to use an incredible amount of science to **collaborate** with people in communities across the United States,”* explained Horen.

Horen remarked that much of the work done at centers nationwide is aimed at **attending to children with disabilities or emotional difficulties** from a systemic perspective.

*“We have an entire research team that takes what’s been learned and incorporates it into the support we provide to the community. We’re striving to **turn evidence into impact** by combining mental health and primary care for early childhood.”*

He also mentioned that they are working on **developing projects with partners at university level**, such as academics from the Faculty of Law or the School of Public Policy.



/> width="900" loading="lazy"> **Communicating and generating impact**

**Priscila Pumarada**, Assistant Director of Innovation Partnerships and Business Development at the Center on the Developing Child at [Harvard University](#), shared her institution's strategies.

She said that universities need to gather **cutting-edge knowledge and evidence** so that people in the field of early childhood can translate them into **feasible solutions for the community**.

Pumarada explained that the Harvard center follows two paths: summarizing, translating, and **communicating the science of early childhood**; and through this, **involving and supporting stakeholders** such as decision-makers to shape and mobilize agendas.

*"We have a group that's dedicated to seeing where there are **collaboration opportunities** for involving leaders such as decision-makers or policymakers to see how we can contribute.*

*"Many times, we realized that people would say, 'OK, I understand the science. What can I do now?' We've developed a group that's focused on instruction to understand how we can **have an active role** in that part of development," said the assistant director.*

<https://www.instagram.com/p/C0KsumetOK0/>

### **Launching the Center for Early Childhood**

[Tec de Monterrey](#) and the [FEMSA Foundation](#) have launched the **Center for Early Childhood**.

“Our mission is very clear: **to promote wellbeing in early childhood** in Mexico and Latin America,” said the center’s associate director.

“We want to create **solutions for children** to improve their wellbeing, which we’re going to achieve through public policy and innovative programs and solutions,” added Gidi.

The Center for Early Childhood’s strategy is **based on 4 pillars**:

- *Cross-cutting and applied research*
- *Education, training the ecosystem’s key stakeholders*
- *Science communication*
- *Outreach*

Through the **Center for Early Childhood**, the **Tec** and the **FEMSA Foundation** will collaborate with **La Tríada** institutions the **University of Los Andes in Colombia** and the **Pontifical Catholic University of Chile**.

“Investing in people and their potential is the only way we have of building **fairer and more prosperous societies**,” said **Eva Fernández**, the Femsfa Foundation’s Manager of Social Investment in Early Childhood, during the center’s launch.

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