

Tec student wins award with road safety project at HackMIT 2024



Pablo Naranjo, a fifth-semester **Mechanical Engineering** degree student at the **Tec's Monterrey campus**, has obtained first place in the **Best Beginner Hack** category at [HackMIT](#) 2024 for developing a road safety *web app* for cyclists and pedestrians together with his team.

In addition to Pablo, **Carolina Quintanilla** and **Luis Montoya**, both students at the **School of Engineering and Sciences** at [Tec de Monterrey](#), also attended the **hackathon**.

The 3 students who participated in the competition competed in different teams as they applied to the hackathon with the aim of networking and meeting people.

HackMIT is one of the largest hackathons in the world. Every fall, participants build, learn about, and create technological projects from scratch at the event held at the **Massachusetts Institute of Technology** (MIT).

https://www.instagram.com/p/DBHa-eJJV6R/?img_index=2

Improving skills for his first hackathon

Upon being accepted, Pablo spent two months improving his programming skills in order to be better prepared for **hacking** and in order to be able to contribute to the technical part, which he

eventually managed to do.

For Pablo, this meant **leaving his comfort zone** and entering the world of programming, overcoming stigmas such as the belief that mechanical engineers do not program, he said.

“My focus isn’t programming. I know how to do it, but it’s not my specialty. I hadn’t entered a hackathon before because I felt I wasn’t particularly good at it. I saw this opportunity and we decided to apply,” explained Pablo Naranjo.



Winning with a road safety app

The **Best Beginner Hack** award is presented each year, alongside awards in 2 other categories, at **HackMIT**.

This award is given to the best project developed by a team which includes a majority of team members participating in their first **hackathon**.

“One moment you know very little about programming and the next day you’re there, competing against the best in the world, and you do well and win a prize and you just can’t even believe it,” he said.

Pablo and his team designed an innovative **road safety web app** called **Get Away**, which **finds optimal and much safer routes for cyclists and pedestrians**, in which Pablo was responsible for the *front and backend* development.

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Users can circle areas that they consider unsafe, and which have poor lighting or lack of bike lanes. This allows the program to automatically calculate the fastest, optimal route without going through the circled areas. It also shares this data with other users.

The **need for this app arose from shared experiences among the team who faced vulnerable situations as pedestrians or cyclists.** It also emphasizes that the priority of the most popular navigation applications is not user safety.

Additionally, their **project is available in all locations** as they make use of *open-source* maps.



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Following his experience at **MIT**, Pablo plans to attend more **hackathons**, to encourage participation in these types of competition for those interested in aerospace topics, and to motivate others to get out of their comfort zone.

“I think there are plenty of opportunities floating around and it’s up to you to find them and use the resources you have to be able to take advantage of them,” Pablo said.

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