

Mexican student from the Tec given award by MIT for COVID-19 project



A group of young people (including one Mexican) **were given an award** by MIT for accepting the challenge of finding a way to help **Latin America** overcome the **COVID-19 crisis** in **different fields**.

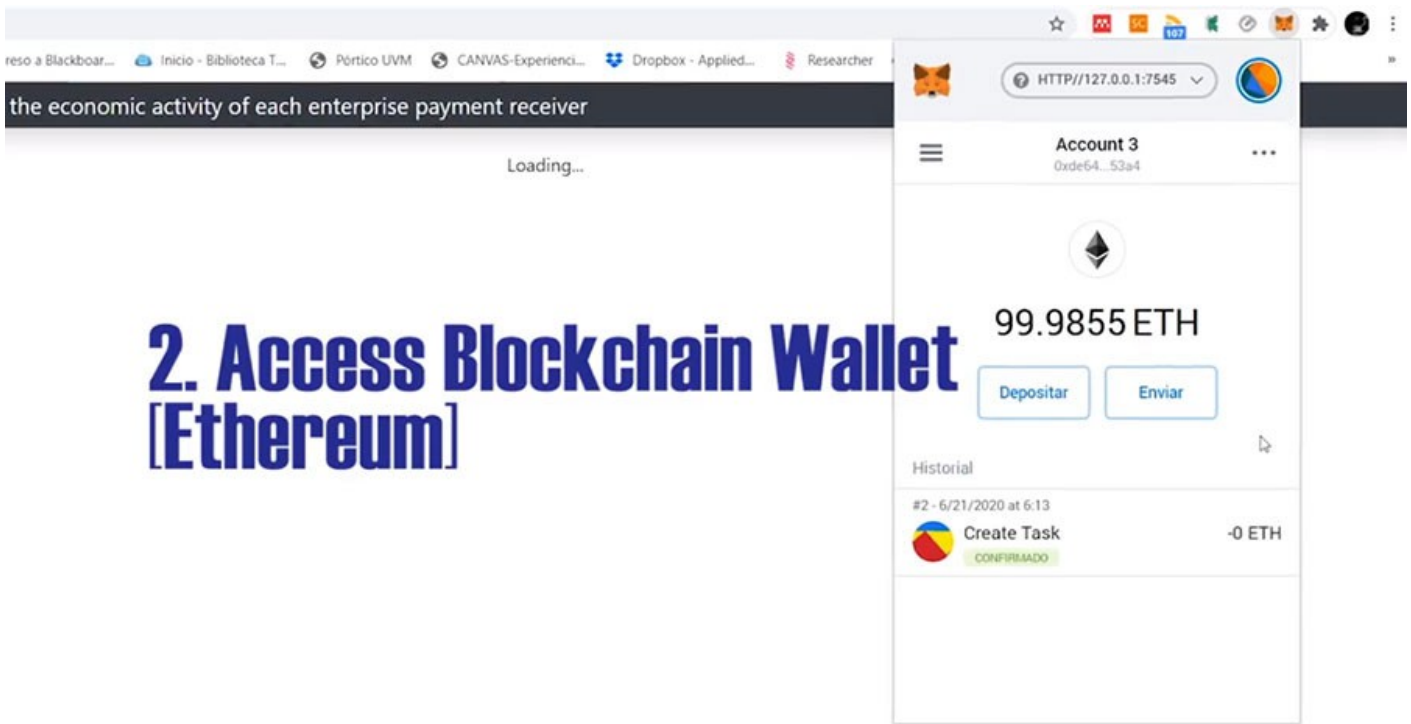
Holkan Vázquez, a student at **Tec de Monterrey**, took part in the [MIT COVID-19 CHALLENGE](#), a hackathon organized by the American university to find viable short-term solutions.

The Tec student teamed up with **2 students from Chile** and **1 from Colombia** to create **Smart Deal**, a project recognized among the **top 3** in the “**Verifying the use of funds to reactivate the economy**” category.

*“We created a **web platform** to ensure that the loans granted (as support during the COVID-19 crisis) were used to **reactivate the economy**,”* said Holkan.

The team had only 72 hours to develop their proposal.

*“(The goal of Smart Deal) is to ensure that money is only spent on approved lines of business. **It shouldn’t be squandered**. The platform works as a **filter** between the **bank** and the **supplier**,”* added Holkan.



2. Access Blockchain Wallet [Ethereum]

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The master's student at **Tec de Monterrey** took part as **the platform's programmer**. The rest of the team was made up of **Matías Coustasse** and **Antonia Urqueta** from Chile, and **Saulo Linares** from Colombia.

When they were **recognized as one of the best teams in the hackathon**, they received various prizes that will help them develop the platform.

THE SMART DEAL PROPOSAL

Smart Deal is based on **Blockchain** and **SmartContracts** technologies, both of which enable secure financial transactions.

The platform will allow the following transactions to take place:

- Companies that have **pre-authorized credit** from the **government** or a **bank** will make a request to use that credit in various areas (such as for payroll or paying suppliers).
- The government or bank will have a **virtual 'wallet'**, from which they can **transfer funds** to these companies through **Blockchain**.

*"This will ensure that **electronic transfers** from the bank to the company's account are only **approved if they meet requirements**," commented **Saulo Linares** during the hackathon.*



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The project is a **prototype**, but after being ranked among the top 3 in the **MIT COVID-19 CHALLENGE**, the team are working to make it a **reality**.

*“The idea is to **set it up in Chile** and deploy it in other countries that are giving large-scale loans, such as **Colombia**”* said Holkan.

PROJECTS FOR LATIN AMERICA IN PARTNERSHIP WITH MIT

The challenge organized by **MIT** brought together more than **1,500 participants** from universities around the world.

Holkan mentioned that he had received the invitation to join the challenge from the Tec de Monterrey **School of Government and Public Transformation**.

The event was held **online** from **June 19 to 21** and the participants had **72 hours** to work on proposals to respond to contemporary problems.

Among the **categories** in the challenge were topics such as ‘**Identifying the COVID-19 Immune**’, ‘**New ways to deliver care in a COVID-19 world**’, and ‘**Supporting marginalized communities confronting the pandemic**’.



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The category in which the **Smart Deal** team participated was “**Verifying the use of funds to reactivate the economy**”, in which they reached second place.

That earned them a prize of **\$300 USD**, plus **\$1,000 USD credit** from **Amazon Web Services** to strengthen their project.

They now also have the option to participate in an **Amazon activation program** that provides **\$5,000 USD credit**, along with mentoring and other benefits.

<https://twitter.com/freddytn/status/1274808399440621574>

LEARNING APPLIED TO PROJECTS

Holkan is currently studying for a **master’s degree** in **Engineering Sciences** at **Tec de Monterrey’s Mexico City campus**.

The **24-year-old** says that he was interested in the challenge because he is currently writing a **thesis** on **environmental impact** and **renewable energies**.

*“This crisis (the COVID-19 pandemic) has **had an impact on everything**, both environmentally and economically,”* he reflected.

*“I like to exchange ideas and my team had **lots of ideas**. I really liked applying the **knowledge** I had acquired in my degree,”* he added.



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Holkan is a **Tec graduate** who studied **Mechatronic Engineering** at the **Aguascalientes campus**

He was part of the **first generation of Leaders of Tomorrow**, a **100% scholarship program** for **young people with limited financial resources** but **huge academic potential**.

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