

IFE launches flagship initiatives to transform universities in LATAM



The IFE is taking steps toward transforming education and career development in Latin America and the Caribbean.

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IFE

The *Institute for the Future of Education* (IFE) has announced the **launch of two flagship initiatives** or **BBIs** (Big Bold Initiatives): BBI #1: The Future of Universities and BBI #2: Skills Ecosystems.

With this announcement, the IFE is taking steps toward **transforming education** and **career development** in Latin America and the Caribbean, said Michael Fung, IFE's Executive Director.

*"These two initiatives promote a **shared vision of more flexible, inclusive education and skills development systems** that are closely connected to social and economic needs," Fung said.*

*“We invite stakeholders from higher education and **skills ecosystems** to collaborate with us in this movement to advance human capital development in the region and beyond,” he added.*

Together, the initiatives respond to rapid changes in labor markets, technology, and social needs by **promoting evidence-based systemic transformation** across higher education institutions and skills development systems.

José Escamilla (left), Associate Director of the IFE, and Michael Fung (center), Executive Director of the IFE, during the BBI presentation at IFE Conference 2026. Photo: IFE



BBI #1: The Future of Universities: Supporting the transition of universities into lifelong learning centers

This focuses on helping universities evolve from traditional, linear, and degree-based models into **flexible, inclusive, and impact-oriented lifelong learning institutions**.

The initiative introduces an **eight-dimension maturity model** that enables universities to assess their current state, identify gaps, and develop strategic plans to guide their transformation.

This model addresses key areas including student-centered educational models based on:

- *Technology*
- *Future-oriented skills development*
- *Flexible learning pathways*
- *Inclusive access and student wellbeing*
- *Research and community impact*
- *Agile leadership*
- *Faculty development*
- *Financial sustainability*

By 2035, the IFE expects that 1,000 universities across the region will reference the maturity model, with at least 200 institutions applying it to guide their institutional transformation, alongside a network of universities serving as regional and global benchmarks.

BBI #2: Skills Ecosystems: Connecting learning, work, and opportunity at scale

This addresses skills gaps and persistent misalignment through a **systemic, ecosystem-based approach** to skills development.

Rather than isolated programs, the initiative promotes **connected skills ecosystems** that align education and training providers, employers, governments, and civil society around shared economic and social development priorities.

At its core is an eight-dimension **capabilities model** that supports planning for:

- *Talent needs*
- *Flexible learning pathway design*
- *Strengthening of skills supply*
- *Improved connections between talent and employment*
- *Implementation of trusted skills credentialing systems and governance assurance*
- *Sustainability*
- *Inclusion*

During its first five years, **the BBI #2 Skills Ecosystems flagship initiative** aims to support up to **one million workers and learners**, as well as up to **50,000 employers**, in adopting skills-based hiring, skills development, and promotion practices.

By 2035, these impacts are expected to increase tenfold across the region.

*“The region faces **unprecedented challenges** that demand deep, large-scale transformations, which we can no longer postpone,”* said José Escamilla, Associate Director of the IFE.

*“At IFE, we seek to equip universities and skills ecosystems with the **tools needed** to drive and accelerate meaningful transformation.”*

The launch of these initiatives took place at IFE Conference 2026. Photo: IFE



About the IFE Conference

This is the twelfth edition of the **IFE Conference** organized by the *Institute for the Future of Education* at Tec de Monterrey, which is being held from January 27 to 29 on the Monterrey campus.

It is considered one of the **most important educational innovation events in the Spanish-speaking world**, featuring keynote speeches, panels, hybrid events, special events, awards ceremonies, presentations, networking opportunities, and more.

*“The **IFE Conference** is a **platform** to energize people for the **educational change** required by Latin America, the Caribbean, and the rest of the world,”* said José Escamilla, Associate Director of the IFE.

*“It’s a space where the main stakeholders (in education) come together. This is the moment where we can make these connections and find out how we can work together to achieve this **transformation**,”* he added.

This year, there are more than **4,300 in-person attendees** and over 1,450 online participants from 46 countries, with more than 500 activities and 860 speakers.

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