

Tec professor wins global award for educational innovation



The paper, developed in collaboration with institutions in Chile, Spain, and Ecuador, won an award at IEEE EDUCON 2026 for its contribution to international research in educational innovation.

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Courtesy of Maritza Peña

Fernanda Camacho Canto

Maritza Peña, a professor from the School of Engineering and Sciences at [Tec de Monterrey's Toluca campus](#), has won the **Best Paper Award** at **IEEE EDUCON 2026**, held in **Cairo, Egypt**.

IEEE EDUCON is one of the annual flagship **events** of the IEEE Education Society, which brings together researchers, teachers, and engineering education experts from Europe, Africa, the Middle East, and other regions around the world.

The IEEE (Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers) is the world's largest technical professional engineering organization, which seeks to promote the development and international dissemination of **scientific and technological knowledge**.

Winning the **Best Paper Award** means that her research has been **evaluated** by international academic peers and selected as one of the conference's **top submissions** within its thematic category.

She won this award for her **research** developed in collaboration with the Pontifical Catholic University of Chile, the University of Girona, Spain, and Universidad San Francisco de Quito, Ecuador.

Dr. Maritza Peña when receiving the award. Photo: Courtesy of Maritza Peña



According to the doctor, the award marks the culmination of a career spanning over a **decade** participating in spaces dedicated to **educational innovation**, both locally and internationally.

*“Winning this award was profound and emotional. It recognizes more than the paper itself; it represents the **culmination** of several years of work,” she said.*

The professor emphasized that this achievement stems from a **collaborative effort** between institutions and academics from different **countries**.

*“This award is a testament to the experience, discipline, and resilience of all these years. What’s more, I didn’t do it alone. **This achievement is shared** with three other universities,” she said.*

“This award is a testament to experience, discipline, and resilience.”

The research team consisted of Wolfgang Rivera, Vania Ramírez, Viviana Guerrero, Elena Rondós, and Pilar Morera, with whom she has consolidated an international and **interdisciplinary working group**.

During IEEE EDUCON 2026, the research was recognized within the **Fostering Cultural Competence in Global Engineering Contexts** category.

Representing the Tec on an international stage

The doctor shared that presenting the work in **Cairo** represented an important professional and academic duty.

*“Presenting before academic peers is important. It **demanded preparation, commitment, and professionalism,**” she said.*

She also highlighted the commitment involved in representing Tecnológico de Monterrey at one of the premier international **engineering education forums**.

*“Representing Tec de Monterrey at that conference required a huge commitment and **determination** to deliver my best.*

*I gave 100 per cent of my ability and expertise to rise to the challenge of being on an **international stage,**” she said.*

Professor Maritza during the IEEE EDUCON 2026 conference. Photo: Courtesy of Maritza Peña



Among the main trends she observed at the conference, she highlighted the rise of **initiatives** related to **AI-driven learning** and **strengthening global citizenship**.

Analyzing the impact of international experiences in the classroom

The award-winning research details how universities implement the **Collaborative Online International Learning** (COIL) methodology and analyzes its **impact** on participating **students**.

This methodology is structured in three phases: **integration** or icebreaker activity, **collaborative activity**, and **final reflection**. The study presented was specifically focused on the **first phase**.

*"We implemented the **COIL** methodology in our **university courses** and, following successful implementation, we analyzed the **impact** of the **experience** on our students," she explained.*

Maritza Peña after receiving the award. Photo: Courtesy of Maritza Peña



According to the academic, the experience combined features rarely seen in this kind of **international collaboration**.

*“We may well be the only **COIL** program in the world that **unites four universities**, more than **ten student nationalities**, over **18 fields of study**, **two continents** and **six university professors**,” she said.*

The team’s paper describes the characteristics of the **icebreaker phase** and its **impact** on the success of **international collaborations** and students’ **academic performance**.

*“COIL is about providing all students with the opportunity to engage in an **international experience without leaving the classroom**,” she said.*

Evidence-based educational innovation

The professor pointed out that one of the project's primary contributions is providing empirical evidence of the effectiveness of **classroom strategies**.

*"Receiving this recognition is proof that **we're on the right track**," she said.*

She also explained that **educational innovation** involves much more than simply adding new activities.

*"**Educational innovation goes beyond implementing new activities**; it requires analysis, validation, and **impact** measurement. It's a whole process of continuous refinement of teaching methods," she said.*

"Educational innovation is a whole process of continuous refinement of teaching methods."

She added that validating these practices enables the design of globally accessible learning experiences.

*"By validating our **educational innovation**, we provide students with more than just learning experiences; **we design opportunities** for them to flourish through **continuous learning** and sharing with university students from other countries," she said.*

A call to share innovation

As part of her message to the academic community, the professor invited **educators** to **document** and **share** the outcomes of their **educational projects**.

*“I would urge teachers to complete the educational innovation cycle: creating and designing **innovative teaching strategies**, **implementing them**, and ultimately **documenting** and **presenting them** at **national** or **international forums**,” she said.*



Chandra Choubey, General Director of the Tec's Toluca campus, Maritza Peña, and Omar Olmos, Director of the School of Engineering and Sciences in Toluca. Photo: Fernanda Camacho

Finally, she shared a message for students looking to participate in **global projects**.

*“I would tell students to be confident that they’re studying at the best university in Mexico, and that’s **a strong foundation for going out into the world**,” she concluded.*

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