A MOMENT FOR KNOWLEDGE SHARING

NEWSLETTER #6 – DECEMBER 2021

Members of ITESCAM with M.Sc. Irmino Perera Díaz, from EARTH University, during the training workshop

HAPPY HOLIDAYS TO OUR PROMOTERS OF CHANGE

We didn't want to end our last newsletter of 2021 without wishing you all a happy holidays.

We will meet again with more positive news about the institutions of the world that are changing their models of higher education in 2022.

"FORMATION OF VALUES" WORKSHOP AT OUR PILOT UNIVERSITIES

Following the goals projected by the Transforming Higher Education project, the Technological Institute of Higher Education of Calkiní, the Technological Institute of Conkal and the Technological Institute of Higher Education of Hopelchen each received M.Sc. Irmino Perera Díaz, professor at EARTH University, who offered a workshop aimed at value-based education for students.

Since one of the elements of success that the project promotes is a value-based educational system for creating ethical leaders and change agents, a workshop to train university leaders and faculty on the design of a systemic value-based educational program was carried out. The focus at Conkal is in two majors: Engineering in Sustainable Agricultural Innovation and Industrial Engineering, while the focus at IT-Conkal and Technological Institute of Higher Education of Hopelchen is in the entire university. The members of the Technical Committee at each university of this project participated, as well as invited teachers.

The workshop sought to develop the framework for the creation of a systemic, value-based educational program centered on defined values by each university and structured learning scenarios for the purpose of educating professionals committed to ethical leadership

Thanks to everyone who made this event possible!

THIRD INTERNATIONAL EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING FORUM ORGANIZED BY THE TECHNOLOGICAL INSTITUTE OF CONKAL
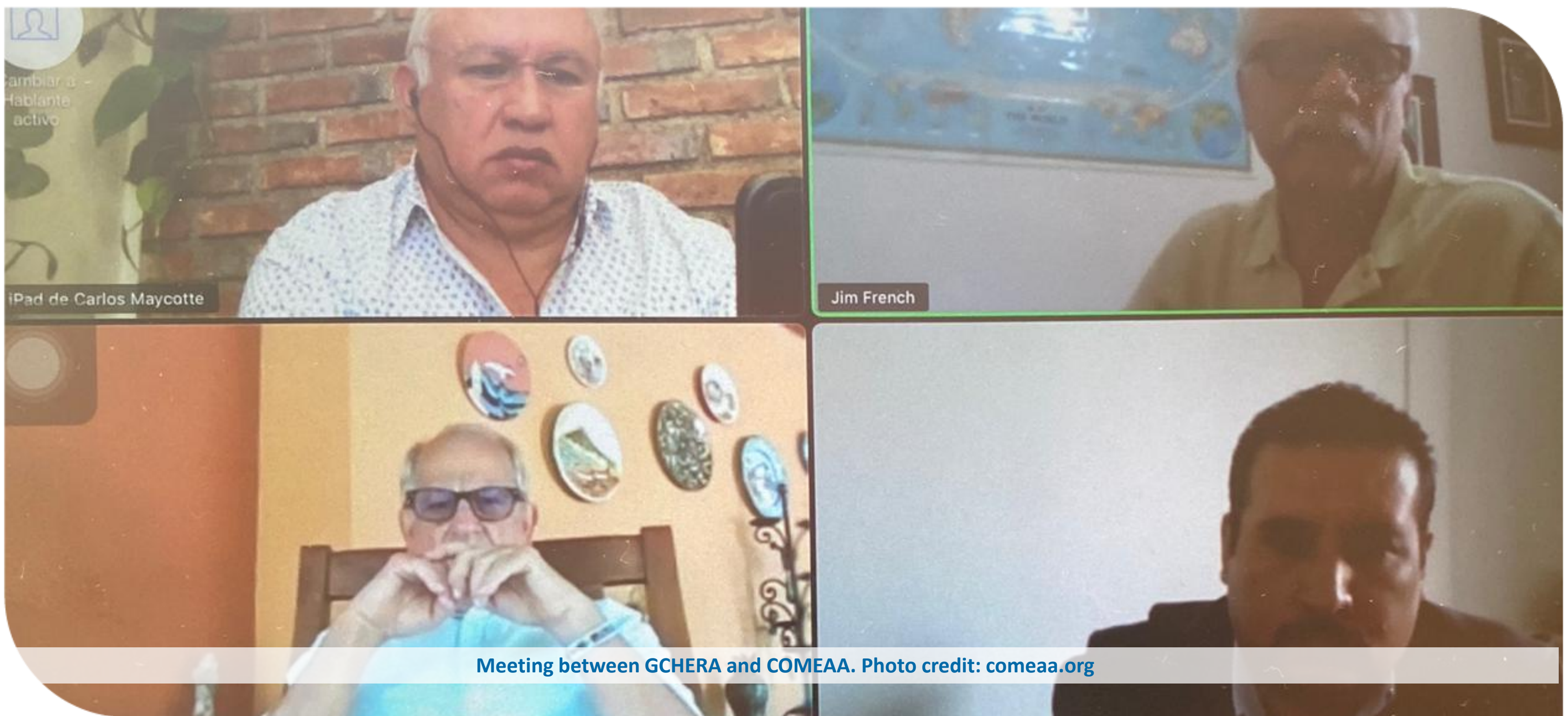
On December 8, the Technological Institute of Conkal held its third student forum and the first international forum for experiential learning "Volvamos al campo" (Let's go back to the field).

The activity was the first time that IT-Conkal opened its doors virtually to presentations from other institutions, fostering the exchange of knowledge between all the universities that are part of the Transforming Higher Education project including participation from Quisqueya University (Haiti) and ITS-Hopelchén (México).

"We've had two student forums that, although we were in the context of the pandemic, generated very good results for us, where we exchanged experiences among our own students and faculty. Now, we wanted to broaden our panorama, we feel ready to receive a broader delegation of panelists who will help us enrich the activity. This was an amazing exercise to strengthen our relations and knowledge sharing within the institutions", mentioned Jorge Gamboa, facilitator of the Transforming Higher Education project at IT Conkal.

The forum included the participation of prominent professors from EARTH University, ECOSUR, CATIE, as well as outstanding projects from the participating universities.

Those interested can read the descriptions of the presentations and the event program on our website, as well as re watch the stream via Facebook.

Meeting between GCHERA and COMEAA. Photo credit: comeaa.org

LET'S WELCOME THE MEXICAN COMMITTEE FOR ACCREDITATION OF AGRONOMIC EDUCATION (COMEAA) TO OUR NETWORK OF UNIVERSITY TRANSFORMATION ALLIES

Recently, the Global Confederation of Higher Education Associations for Agricultural and Life Sciences (GCHERA), celebrated the incorporation of the Mexican Committee for Accreditation of Agronomic Education, A.C. (COMEAA) as an associate member of the Confederation.

This incorporation aims for the inclusion of the five elements of success of the transforming higher education project as part of the evaluation system of agricultural universities in Mexico and as a consulting entity for other universities on the continent.

COMEAA is the first accrediting agency within GCHERA called to actively participate in the organization and seeks to "promote international accreditations of projects done in Central America and the personal relationships of COMEAA's executive staff with different actors that promote change in superior education internationally", the institution mentioned on their website.

We had the opportunity to interview Carlos Maycotte, president of COMEAA, who joined us to talk about the modern vision that they want to implement in current educational models, where the student is placed at the center of the teaching system, and the professor-student relationship is not unilateral, but a learning process where both parties nurture each other.

"We want teachers to be knowledge managers. We're in a society of creators, and education must logically change. It is key for educational programs to evolve". Read the full interview on the [news section](#) of our website.

WORKSHOP SUMMARY: EXCHANGE OF EXPERIENCES BETWEEN THE PILOT UNIVERSITIES OF THE TRANSFORMING HIGHER EDUCATION PROJECT

In November 2021, the members of the pilot universities of the Transforming Higher Education Project (Quisqueya University, ITESCAM, IT-Conkal, and ITS-Hopelchén) participated in a four-day workshop, with the purpose of sharing their experiences, including successes, challenges, and problems and how they overcame them, promoting cross learning between all institutions.

The session was incredibly enriching, where each facilitator presented their main findings, encouraging conversation and discussion, under the premise that "what I know can be useful for others".

Among some of the consensuses that were reached as a group among all the participating universities were:

• Ancestral knowledge: The involvement of the community and the families of the students in the experiential education model has allowed many of the institutions to recover knowledge related to the first generations of farmers in the area, allowing an interesting exchange between the new techniques based on science and all those practices derived from the empiricism of the first inhabitants of the site.

• Experiential learning: This educational model allows students to apply the theory they learn in class to real situations and problems, and to learn from experiences. The flexibility of this educational model allows you to learn from trial and error. This is the richness of experiential learning.

• Interdisciplinary work: The synergy obtained from the involvement of different sectors has contributed not only to the improvement of the communication skills between students and professors, but, within the same universities, other careers have integrated their knowledge so that projects complete full circle. Furthermore, externally, universities have - in many cases even started - communication with the private sector, opening the doors to investment, job creation; and with the public sector, also generating jobs and recognition of proposals at the government level.

• Competitiveness and reactivation of some productive areas: Working directly with the communities caused the parties to become aware of unexplored or under-exploited economic areas capable of generating income.

• Change of mentality to teachers: They are shown that their teaching time is optimized, making the most of the resources invested.

• Professionalization of degrees: Currently, universities are exploring not only the careers they offer, but also technical degrees. In the new graduates, the elements of success are included, generating skilled professionals.

• Collaborative learning and potential catalysts: The model has pushed students to fully exploit their potential, encouraging them to try areas outside of their comfort zone or some that they did not even know they had aptitude for.

• Teachers take a role not only of covering the syllabus, but of promoting soft skills, creating leaders, promoting values and ethics and together they form a student capable of facing the challenges of today's society. As facilitators of learning, the teachers learn as much from the students and communities as compared to what students learn from them.