

Latin American VIP Sites participate in International Bootcamp on Sustainability and Rural Development

Academics and students from Universidad Mayor (Chile), Universidad ICESI (Colombia), Universidad Peruana de Ciencias Aplicadas (Perú) and Universidad de Chile participated in the third International Bootcamp of the Vertically Integrated Project (V.I.P.) LATAM Cluster, hosted by the VIP International Consortium. Over 70 participants from the three countries worked simultaneously in real-time to solve sustainability challenges at the rural territorial level, addressing practical cases tied to local issues in each participating region. They received guidance from distinguished experts from the countries involved and presented their results to an international jury.

In the case of Chile, the team was led by Sofía Vargas, a faculty from the School of Environment and Sustainability at the Universidad Mayor, and Leonardo Palacios, a faculty from the College of Architecture and Urbanism at the Universidad de Chile Chile. Meanwhile, the Colombian team was led by Professor Helena Cancelado from the Industrial Engineering Department at Universidad ICESI, and the Peruvian team was led by Professor Gwendolin Heyne from the Architecture Department at UPC.

For Vargas, the bootcamp represented “an excellent opportunity for students to connect with peers from other disciplines and universities, both nationally and internationally. I believe it's essential for students to have these opportunities to collaborate and tackle problems in an interdisciplinary way. This experience is a clear example of how we can promote interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary work, and it would be interesting to involve more students and academics in the future.”

The event was inaugurated by Professor Edward Coyle, Director of the VIP Consortium at the Georgia Institute of Technology, who emphasized, “These regional bootcamps, organized by Latin American universities in our program, are a practice we aim to document and share with universities around the world that participate in the consortium. By doing so, we hope to incorporate these innovative practices into their own programs, potentially impacting the global program on a larger scale.”

One participant, Ignacio Hurtado, an Architecture student at Universidad Mayor, commented, “Activities like this help build confidence in us to interact with others in a professional setting. Sometimes it's hard to engage, exchange ideas, and discuss different points of view. It's always challenging, and we truly appreciate opportunities like this where we can practice those skills”.

Cristián Celedón, Director of the Educational Innovation Center at Universidad Mayor and the organizer of the event, emphasized that higher education today faces significant challenges such as internationalization, engagement with global issues, technological disruption, and the need to develop high-level competencies in students. “That's why activities like this, developed in collaboration with universities from various Latin American countries and in partnership with the Vertically Integrated Project Program from Georgia

Tech, allow us to address these challenges with a transdisciplinary perspective and work together internationally to offer our students a high-quality educational experience,” he concluded.