



## International mobility in students of the CUCHS of the University of Guadalajara. Experience factors.

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### SUMMARY

This article analyzes the factors concomitant to the experience of international mobility of undergraduate students of the University Center for Social Sciences and Humanities, CUCSH,



of the University of Guadalajara. General factors related to the sex of the participants, age during the exchange, country and university of destination, support and economic resources to carry it out, approximate cost of the same, difficulties, learning, desire to leave the exchange, desires to live in the destination country, as well as its effects on identity and belonging to the career they are currently studying and with the university.

**Keywords:** International mobility. Internationalization. Mobility experience. Experience factors.

## ABSTRACT

This article analyses the factors concomitant to the experience of international mobility of undergraduate students of the University Center for Social Sciences and Humanities, of the University of Guadalajara. General factor related to the sexual gender of the participants, age during academic exchange, country and university of destination, financial support and resources to carry it out, approximate costs, difficulties, learning, desire to abandon the Exchange, desire to live in the destination country, as well as its effects on identity and sense of belonging to the career they are currently studying and as its effects on identity and sense of belonging to the university that sent them.

**Keywords:** International mobility. Internationalization. Mobility experience. Experience factors

## Introduction

Since March 13, 2020, the World Health Organization declared COVID-19 a pandemic, the daily lives of people in the world were radically transformed. Educational practices were reduced to tele-education through electronic devices and the encounter between people was reduced to a minimum, as a result of confinement at home. Students who made academic stays in universities other than their headquarters and lived the experience of international mobility or academic exchange had to return to their countries of origin overcoming difficulties and uncertainties in a novel context of airport closures and flight cancellations to avoid the expansion of infections. Governments sought to repatriate students and tourists stranded in other countries. The pandemic brought as a consequence the cessation of international academic mobility until there are better times and conditions or until



other ways of doing it are possible. This article presents a pre-pandemic study of the experience of academic mobility that began when it was not even imaginary that it would occur.

International academic mobility also known as *international academic exchange* and internationalization can be student to take some subjects, teaching to teach courses or research. These activities are carried out, after an inter-institutional agreement, in a university or research center other than the one to which it belongs. Since the end of the twentieth century – and most strongly in the twenty-first century – higher education has strengthened international exchange in the last twenty years. Jocelyn Gacel has defined the internationalization of higher education as "a process of institutional transformation that aims to integrate the international and intercultural dimension into the mission, culture, development plans and general policies of Higher Education Institutions" (Gacel, 2000, p. 122). Therefore, international student mobility is inserted in a framework of internationalization of universities. A series of factors of a cultural, family, economic, institutional nature, as well as a crossroads of personal competences are combined to concretize it. The international integration of students and cultural diversity are key factors in the formation of professional identity.

From the end of the twentieth century, John Biggs called "International Students" those who were studying a university degree in another country and referred that between 1974 and 1994 British and Australian universities did not become more international, but more regional having had a receiving increase from 4% to 43% in that period, but fell from 54% to 31% as broadcasters of international students from the *Commonwealth* in the same period.

Twenty years later, in relation to international mobility figures, *Forbes Mexico* (June 28, 2017) indicates that a little more than 16,700 Mexican students who travel abroad, 57.6%, do so to study a bachelor's degree, 24.9% to study a master's degree and 17.5% for other types of studies. The same source places Mexico in 10th place for the number of students who go out to study at foreign universities. The publication does not say whether the studies are total or partial at the educational levels mentioned, however the discourse assumes that undergraduate and postgraduate studies are complete.



For its part, the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, OECD, in the report *Panorama of education 2018* points out that Mexico is a country with an increase in receiving international students in undergraduate studies. Between 2013 and 2016 the increase was 58% and the percentage of Mexican students enrolled abroad grew by 16% in the same period. What was reported by this organization in *Panorama de la educación 2020*, is that between 2014 and 2018, in Mexico, the population of foreign students remained stable, without growth or decrease, while only 1% of Mexican students of higher education enroll in a foreign program; half compared to the percentage of students from OECD countries. The United States is the English-speaking country of choice for the international mobility of Mexicans.

If one thinks of the origin of the strengthening for international mobility in higher education, one necessarily arrives at the Tuning Project, whose immediate antecedent is the Declaration of the Sorbonne (Joint Declaration for the Harmonization of the Design of the European Higher Education System), signed on May 25, 1998, which in relation to the subject in question points out:

At both the undergraduate and graduate levels, students would be encouraged to spend at least one semester at universities located outside their countries. In turn, there would be more teaching and research staff carrying out their professional activities in European countries other than those of origin. Growing support for the European Union, as far as the mobility of students and teachers is concerned, should be fully exploited (Sorbonne Declaration, 1998, p.2).

The continuity of the project of university integration in Europe, led to the fact that a year later, on June 19, 1999, twenty-nine European countries had signed the Bologna Declaration, with the commitment to converge the structures of higher education systems. The meaning of international academic mobility continued in the same terms as the preceding declaration:

Promotion of mobility, removing obstacles to the effective exercise of free trade, paying particular attention to:

-Access to study and training opportunities and related services for students.



-The recognition and assessment of periods of stay in European research, teaching and training institutions, without prejudice to their statutory rights, for teachers, researchers and administrative staff. (Bologna Declaration, 1999, p. 2).

International mobility opened paths for students and research professors in academic exchange. Tuning went from being a project to a methodology (USA). VV, 2007, p. 12). The Tuning – Latin America project, already in 2007, expresses the need to cooperate and to assume this cooperation for the improvement of the training of future professionals:

The choice to use common reference points and not definitions of subjects (courses, subjects) shows a clear positioning, since if you want to promote professional and academic mobility between our countries, university training in each one has to present a certain level of consensus, with respect to points of reference agreed jointly, and recognized within each of the specific areas and disciplines (USA). VV, 2007, p. 15).

From this perspective, international academic mobility is not understood as a casual stay of professional training or a random opportunity to enroll in a national or foreign university other than the one of origin, but an institutional co-responsibility of the sending and receiving universities for professional training, mediated by international agreements and interuniversity agreements that unify but do not standardize educational visions and training methodologies.

The University of Guadalajara points out that internationalization in higher education, in addition to contributing to the training of students in the terms of generic and specific professional skills and performance in multicultural environments, indicated in Tuning Europe and Tuning Latin America, "also seeks the civic training of graduates, extending their participation both in the local environment and in the global scene" (<http://www.udg.mx/es/internacional1>).

According to the General Coordination of Cooperation and Internationalization, the stays for students of the University of Guadalajara are of three types: a) Stays to take subjects for one or two semesters, b) Stays for professional practices in a work environment related to their professional training, c) Research stays in which the student enrolls as an assistant of a prestigious researcher in



the destination university or institute, but with the premise of inquiring into your thesis or thesis project and can opt for the degree under this modality (<http://www.udg.mx/internacional/para-udg/tipos-de-estancias-universitarias>).

The highest house of studies of the state of Jalisco has established international cooperation agreements for bachelor's degrees with institutions in thirty-eight countries of the world and, for postgraduate studies, with institutions in thirty-five countries. In addition, it has agreements with sixty-six Mexican universities for undergraduate exchange and sixty-three for postgraduate exchange (The highlight of this list can be consulted at (<http://www.cgci.udg.mx/convenios/instituciones-socias-estudiantes>)). The number of agreements signed by the University of Guadalajara for internationalization expands the mobility offer and strengthens the institution.

### **Brief state of the art**

In the first part of an analysis carried out in 2000 on the international dimension of Mexican universities, Jocelyne Gacel reviewed the concepts of internationalization and interculturization, their foundations and implications for Mexican universities in the then incipient framework of internationalization processes. It proposes that this and interculturality should not be an end in itself, but a means to achieve academic excellence, and insists on humanism as the foundation of them above economism by maintaining, from a socio-cultural approach, that both must serve the development of the individual -be it student, professor or administrator-, rather than that of the institution and the nation.

Subsequently, Jocelyne Gacel herself, together with Hans De Wit, Isabel Cristina Jaramillo and Jane Knight edited in English a book sponsored by the World Bank and published in Spanish by Mayol Ediciones, of Bogotá, Colombia: *Higher Education in Latin America. The international dimension* (2005), in which they analyze individually and sometimes collectively the model of internationalization as a response to new challenges and realities, regional and international challenges for higher education in Latin America, internationalization in higher education in Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Cuba, Mexico and Peru, in addition to the link between key actors



and programs in the region. They close the analysis with the main trends, problems to be solved and the directions to follow in the direction of internationalization.

Lucas Luchilo (2006), conducted a study on the global dimensions of international mobility in the higher education of graduate students in science and engineering, mainly at universities in the United States. Luchilo's questions about how countries of origin can retain students who studied abroad are valuable, which becomes a concern for countries that invest in training but lose recourse by not recovering them for their benefit.

Internationalization has several edges from which it can be studied. Jesús Sebastián (2011), from the Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, in Madrid, Spain, studied the dual process of internationalization, which is expressed in one aspect within universities and another outside them. In addition, his study also emphasizes international cooperation networks as an instrument for internationalization that impacts degrees of associability and degrees of added value, which range from the exchange of information to clusters (sic) of knowledge.

The main trends and patterns followed by the international mobility of undergraduate students (called tertiary education in other countries) as a global phenomenon, are analyzed by Rosa Emilia Bermúdez Rico, from the University of Cali, Colombia. The article "International mobility for study reasons: Geography of a global phenomenon", published in 2015, realized that it is the countries of the north that are the main recipients of this mobility and "the predominance of Asian countries in the dispute to obtain a greater professional qualification with international standards in the world context" (p. 95). The author analyzed student mobility based on statistics from UNESCO and the OECD, while emphasizing its growth by going from, for example, 800,000 students in 1975 to 4.1 million in 2010. On the other hand, it elaborates professional, institutional and international stratifications to understand mobility today, so it is a valuable contribution to this study.

At the local level, Elia Marum Espinoza (2004), from the University of Guadalajara, delved into the self-conception of 50 foreign students in higher education institutions outside their country regarding learning processes in an environment other than the country of origin and their perceptions about the educational system and about the institution that received them. This study was conducted



between January and May 2003 with foreign students participating in exchange programs in the Guadalajara Metropolitan Area. The participants were mostly women (74.5%) and men covered 25.5% from 11 countries, mainly from the United States, Canada, Europe and Latin America, with a predominance of exchange in undergraduate studies.

In 2020, *PuntoCuNorte*, Magazine of the University Center of the North, of the University of Guadalajara, dedicated its number 10 (January-June 2020) to the theme on The internationalization of universities. There, in "Student mobility and its impact on internationalization strategies at home", Magdalena Liliana Bustos-Aguirre offers a classification of the types of cross-border student mobility, as well as the strategies of the same at home. Tania Lafont reviews the indicators of the management of internationalization at the Simón Bolívar University in Barranquilla, Colombia; his article is entitled "Internationalization at the Simón Bolívar University; a look from the American Council of Education." For her part, Martha María Hernández Ochoa investigates the personal, family and professional factors that impact students in international mobility, as well as their advantages and disadvantages, in "Model guide to carry out an international mobility". Jesús esperanza López Cortés and Sandra Ovando Ordóñez present the results of a survey applied to 140 students of Administration and Accounting, from the Autonomous University of Chiapas, on the factors that affect the decision of student mobility and linked them with the narrative of a student with different abilities; his article is entitled: "Impact of international student mobility on students with disabilities: an approach from the School of Administrative Sciences, campus IX, Tonalá, Autonomous University of Chiapas". Finally, Rosa María Ortega Sánchez, in "International dimension of higher education in the northern region of Jalisco" recovers the importance of outgoing international mobility in the students and teachers of that University Campus.

International mobility as an object of study still has many edges to explore the value of its educational wealth. This study aims to contribute in part to the understanding of the phenomenon in higher education.

## Method and Materials



It is an exploratory cross-sectional study with levels of descriptive and interpretative analysis to analyze how the phenomenon of international academic mobility manifests itself in students of the University Center for Social Sciences and Humanities (CUCSH) of the University of Guadalajara. It was carried out between July 2019 and February 2021 with a sample of 53 students who lived the experience of international mobility between 2017 and 2019, in order to know the factors concomitant to the mobility experience. Of these students, 6 were foreigners on incoming mobility whose destination was the CUCSH; In addition, 3 students from the sample made national mobility in Mexico. The 53 students were given a questionnaire with 24 short questions related to sex, study career, current age and age during the experience, country and university of destination, supports or economic resources to perform it, approximate cost of it; This questionnaire included seven open-ended questions about experiences (learning and difficulties) of mobility, identity and belonging effects related to the career and university. The selection criteria was to be a student of the CUCSH, to have lived the experience of international mobility or to be living it. The quantitative data were graphed in order to show an overview of them, which together with the answers to the open questions allowed the knowledge of what they lived in the experience. It should be clarified that although there was no participation of all CUCSH students in mobility during the research period, the sample obtained is sufficient for the consistency of the analysis and understanding of the phenomenon, information that may be useful for those who are in the pending mobility decision. Finally, it is necessary to specify that all the graphs and tables that appear in this article are prepared by the authors, so the source in each one will be omitted.

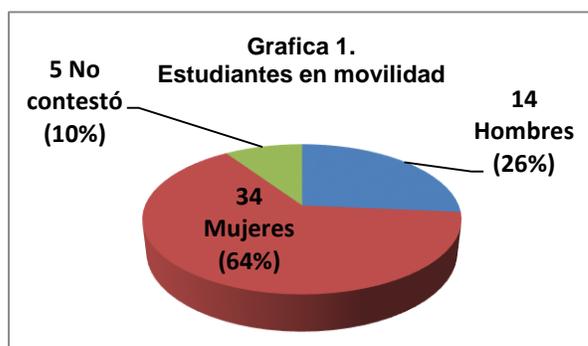
## Results and Discussion

For international mobility, students presumably settle a series of procedures to be covered and personal difficulties until they achieve it. Gacel (2000) states that "the motives for internationalization at the level of an individual, an institution or a nation are complex and evolve over time, in addition to changing and adapting to the needs and trends of the historical moment" (p. 123). International mobility, academic exchange or internationalization is an experience that for various reasons few



undergraduate students can live compared to the total university enrollment. Even so, it has increased in recent years. *The national survey of international student mobility 2014/2015 and 2015/2016, Patlani,* reveals that in the 2014-2015 school year there was an outgoing mobility of 24,900 students compared to an incoming one of 15,608; while in the year 2015-2016 the numbers were 29,401 and 20,322 respectively, which represented an annual increase of 8.3% in outbound mobility and 7.6% in inbound mobility. The same source points out that the University of Guadalajara is one of the four universities in the country with the highest student mobility, with an outgoing mobility of 1,503 students in 2014-2015 and 1,672 students in 2015-2016 (8.9% more). However, the Undergraduate page of the University of Guadalajara reports that there were 2,220 students in outgoing mobility to institutions in 34 countries, in 2014, and an incoming mobility of 1,964 students.

Regarding mobility by sex, Patlani's indicators report greater mobility of women than men in both periods, on average 54.5% and 45.5% respectively. This phenomenon is replicated in CUCSH students (Graph 1):



There are propitious stages in people's lives to carry out their projects; the stage of student mobility is during the course of the career. The students participating in this study studied the following careers between 2017 and 2020, a range that includes the period when they lived the mobility experience:

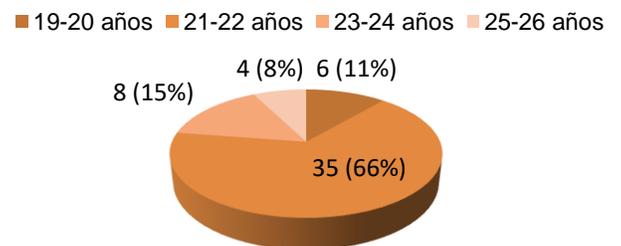
Table 1. Career of students in mobility 2017-2020  
CUCSH, University of Guadalajara



|  |           |
|--|-----------|
| Law or Lawyer                                  | 15        |
| International relations                        | 12        |
| Hispanic Lyrics                                | 9         |
| English teaching (Peruvians)                   | 5         |
| Anthropology                                   | 4         |
| Philosophy                                     | 1         |
| Sociology                                      | 1         |
| Social work                                    | 2         |
| History  | 1         |
| Political and government studies               | 1         |
| Marketing                                      | 1         |
| Linguistic and cultural mediation<br>(Italian) | 1         |
| <b>Total</b>                                   | <b>53</b> |

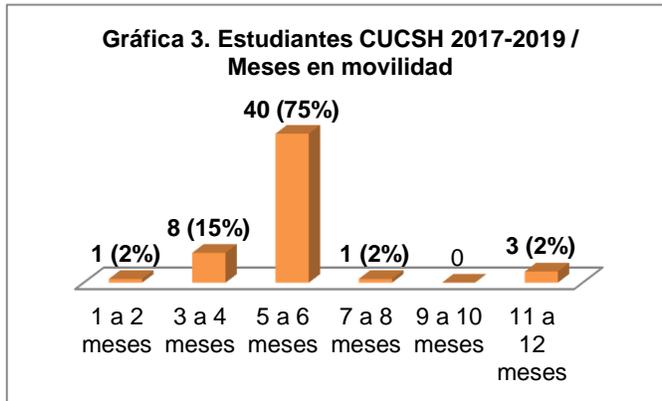
The ages that students report having had during their mobility experience range from 19 to 26 years old. In Graph two you can see that 6 students were between 19 and 20 years old (11.32%); 35, between 21 and 22 years old (66%); 8 between 23 and 24 (15%) and 4 students were between 25 and 26 years old (8%). These are the ages at which students normally pursue their bachelor's or undergraduate degree, in addition to being an age conducive to the diversity of learning that they live in the mobility experience and coincides with the ages of the study of Corbella & Elías (2018) about the factors that affect the decision to choose a country as an academic mobility destination (where appropriate, Argentina).

**Gráfica 2. Edad de estudiantes en movilidad CUCSH 2017-2019**





The duration of academic mobility is defined in the institutional programs that organize it. National mobility lasts between 2 and 6 months and international mobility from 5 to 12 months, although the average is usually 5 to 6 months. This temporality is reported by the majority of students



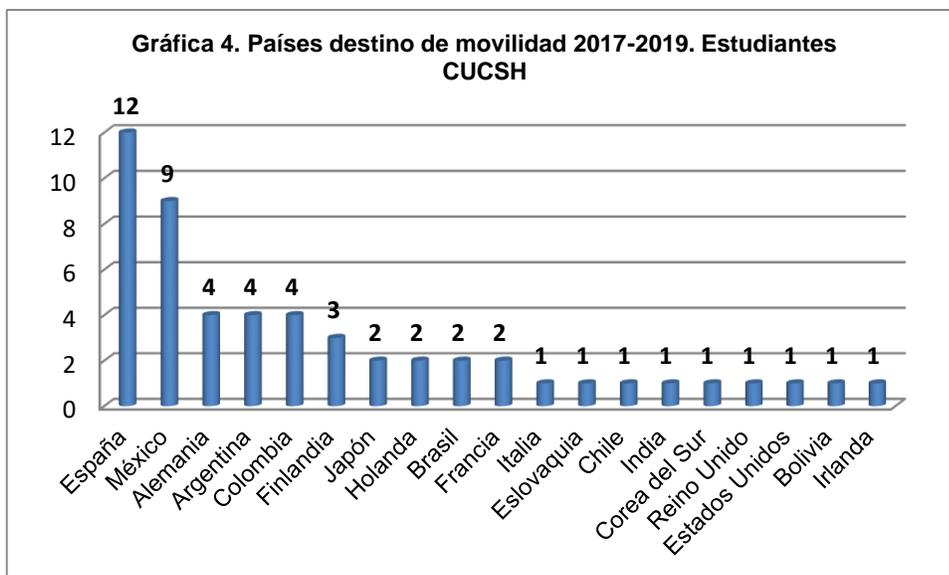
participating in the 40/53 study, which is 75% (see Figure 3 for more detail). Here it is necessary to clarify that of the 53 students in the sample, 44 concluded the time of the experience and nine had to suspend it due to the pandemic caused by SARS-COV-2 in 2019, so they had to return home earlier than planned.

As mentioned above, of the students participating in the sample, 6 were foreigners (5 from Peru and 1 from Italy), whose incoming mobility destination was the University Center for Social Sciences and Humanities (CUCSH), of the University of Guadalajara, Mexico. On the other hand, the destination countries of the Mexican students were 19; In Graph 4 it can be seen that six are the Spanish-speaking destination countries, which received 30 students, which represents 56.6% of the total sample. So it is presumed that the language can be decisive in the decision of the country of destination and, although the questionnaire did not include the question of why the country was chosen, it is now valued as a necessary question to better understand the decision process on the destination of mobility, which does not exempt from the knowledge of another language to those who opted for the experience of international mobility in a Spanish-speaking country. However, the data is significant and a conjecture can be ventured in this regard: knowledge of the language implies the implicit security of efficient communication in a novel and unknown context; although there may be other reasons, in addition to language (Corbella & Elías, 2018), such as sociocultural affinity, tourist attractions, geographical location, climate. The remaining 23 students must necessarily have had



communication skills in another language as the basis of their experience. Later they will mention that their stay abroad helped them perfect the language.

Being an institutional program, academic mobility gives students the guarantee of the support of the issuing university, as well as the receiving university. Table 2 shows the universities receiving the outgoing mobility students of the



CUCSH, plus the six foreigners received on this university campus. A total of 42 universities received the 53 students from the study. It can be inferred that students do not travel in a group, but that the procedure, the trip and the stay are individual, although in the receiving university students of the same nationality may coincide and meet there, but not before. 36 students in the sample did not have classmates from the university of origin, which exposes them to their own skills for learning without taking refuge in the security granted by the cultural company.

**Table 2. Universities receiving students in mobility, CUCSH, 2017-2019**

| University              | No. Students | University              | No. Students |
|-------------------------|--------------|-------------------------|--------------|
| U. Almería, Spain       | 3            | U. Buhh, United Kingdom | 1            |
| U. de Oviedo, Spain     | 2            | U. Hosei, Japan         | 1            |
| U. Köln, Germany        | 2            | Or. La Salle, Colombia  | 1            |
| U. Utrecht, Netherlands | 2            | U. Korea, South Korea   | 1            |



|   |   |  |   |
|---|---|--|---|
| U. of Lyon, France                      | 1 | U. Augsburg, Germany                         | 1 |
| Easternfinland, Finland                 | 1 | U. Lille, France                             | 1 |
| U. de La Coruña, Spain                  | 1 | U. Aichi, Japan                              | 1 |
| UCES, Argentina                         | 1 | U. Zilina, Slovakia                          | 1 |
| U. Lleida, Spain                        | 1 | U. de la Pampa, Argentina                    | 1 |
| U. Jyväskylä, Finland                   | 1 | U. Gulu, Finland                             | 1 |
| U. Cantabria, Spain                     | 1 | U. Campinas, Brazil                          | 1 |
| U. Burgo, Spain                         | 1 | Washington Center, USA                       | 1 |
| CM of Cundinamarca, Colombia            | 1 | U. Aconcagua, Argentina                      | 1 |
| U. Murcia, Spain                        | 1 | UnCuyo, Argentina                            | 1 |
| U. Zaragoza, Spain                      | 1 | U. Santiago, Chile                           | 1 |
| UC. Paraná, Brazil                      | 1 | U. Javeriana, Colombia                       | 1 |
| U. San Fco Xavier, Bolivia              | 1 | U. Pablo de Olavide, Spain.                  | 1 |
| U. Antioquia, Colombia                  | 1 | University College Cork                      | 1 |
| Tata of Social Science, India           | 1 | U. Guadalajara                               | 6 |
| U. Mannheim, Germany                    | 1 | UNAM   | 2 |
| U. Cá Foscari, Italy                    | 1 | U. Veracruzana                               | 1 |
| <b>Total: 42 Receiving Universities</b> |   | <b>53 students in international mobility</b> |   |

From this same sample, 3 Mexican students experienced national mobility: two at the National Autonomous University of Mexico and one at the Universidad Veracruzana. The national academic mobility favors learning experiences mainly academic related to the curriculum, academic level of the career and specific didactics, as well as teaching and student cultural practices, rather than intense experiences of cultural shock and emotional impact that do usually occur in international mobility.

A key aspect of mobility is cost. What is the cost for an exchange semester? There is no single answer to this question, but there are expert approaches. For students who want to have an international experience, knowing it has the main importance, because it is the basis for establishing the possibility and planning of it. The cost of mobility is not standardized due to the diversity of economic variables, cost of living between countries of origin and destination, as well as currency

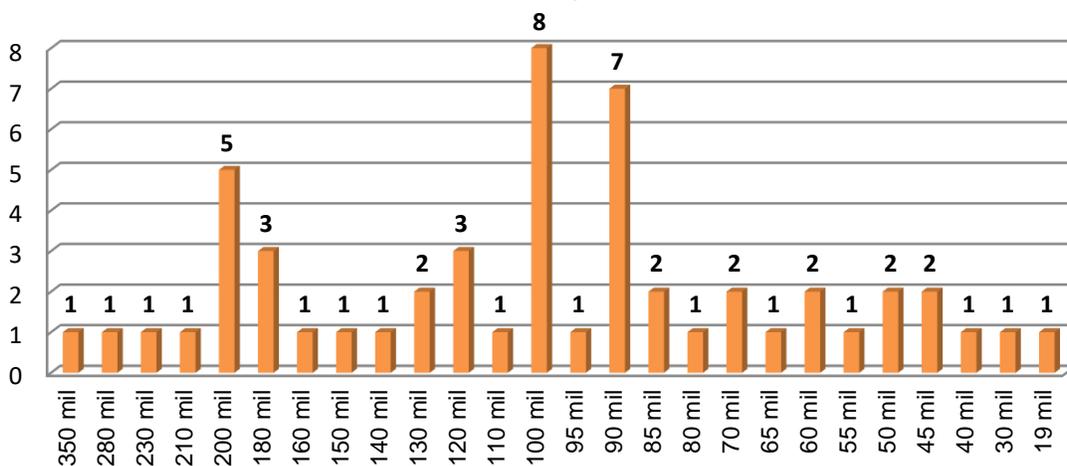


parity. For EF (Education First), a formula to calculate what would be paid in December 2019 for a semester, would be: Price per week (USD \$600/Week) + money for expenses (Reasonable USD \$110.00/Week) + flight + insurance + visa. Total: USD \$710/Week x 25 weeks per semester = USD \$17,750, approximately. With a parity of \$20.50 pesos per dollar, in March 2021 = \$363,875 Mexican pesos + flight + insurance + visa.

LR, the Insurance Company La República, of Colombia, in December 2017 calculated an approximate monthly maintenance for food and transport, in France (USD \$695), the United Kingdom (USD \$1,353), Spain (USD \$688) and the United States (USD \$1,299). Converted to Mexican pesos, with a parity of 20.50 per dollar, this would be the cost per month and semester in each country, respectively: France (\$14,247.5 x 6 months = \$85,485 pesos), United Kingdom (\$27,636.5 x 6 months = \$166,414 pesos), Spain (\$14,104 x 6 months = \$84,624 pesos) and United States (\$26,629.5 x 6 months = \$159,777 pesos). To these figures will have to be added the cost of flights, insurance and visas.

The approximate figures for a semester of international exchange offered by EF and LR have

**Gráfica 5. Costo aproximado de movilidad estudiantil en miles de pesos (2017-2019)**



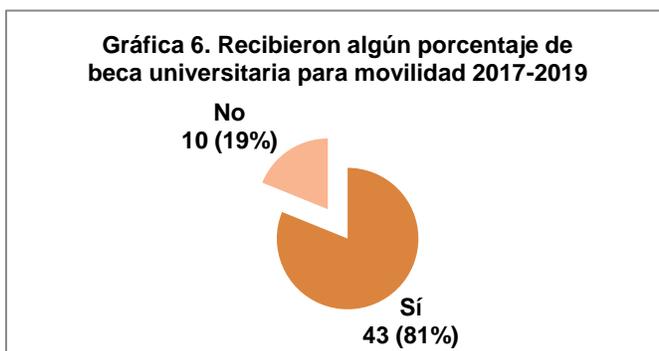
a notable difference between them. Why is that? EF includes tuition payments and LR

does not. For the students who make up the sample, the cost of the exchange ranged between 19,000 and 350,000 pesos in the years 2017 to 2019. Thirty-three students fall into the range between 90,000 and 200,000 pesos, which are relatively coincident with the LR figures, as can be seen in Graph 5.



The data in Figure 5 are those reported by CUCSH students. Students with a mobility project may wonder where they would get the resources to do it. One of the great advantages of belonging to a Higher Education Institution is the possibility of obtaining scholarships to reduce the economic weight to the families of the students. The General Coordination of Cooperation and Internationalization (CGCI), under the Executive Vice-Rector of the University of Guadalajara, coordinates, among other activities, the academic mobility for students. In addition, it provides them with information to obtain public or private economic resources through the Economic Support Program for International Mobility, in order for students to obtain a scholarship to fully or partially cover the expenses during their academic stay, such as lodging, food, medical insurance, local transportation, school supplies, among others (March 23, 2021, [http://www.cgci.udg.mx/es/estudiantes/programas\\_movilidad/programa\\_ae](http://www.cgci.udg.mx/es/estudiantes/programas_movilidad/programa_ae)).

In Graph 6 it can be seen that of the 53 students participating in the sample, 43 of them (81%)

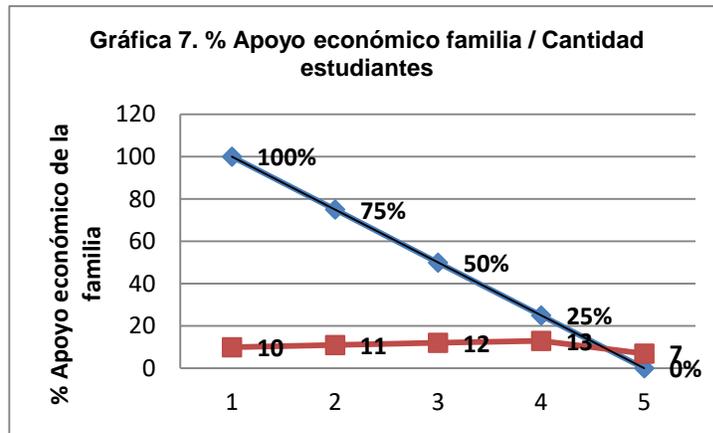


received a university scholarship for mobility and 10 students (19%) did not, so they had to seek financial support from the family for all expenses, as represented in Graph 7, which also accounts for the percentage of economic support that students received from their family: 11 students received 75%, 12 students

obtained 50%, 13 students, 25% and 7 students did not receive or did not require financial support from their family.



The University and the family are key institutions as support and support that enables student mobility: the family as moral and economic support and the university as academic and economic support, too, without it would not be possible for



family

students to live this international or national experience of personal development and professional training. As for relational and emotional experiences, human beings establish affective bonds with each other that impact moods and personal and social behaviors, as well as possible decisions to be made at critical moments.

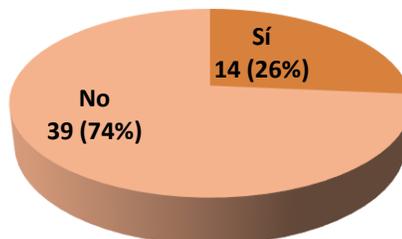
which

The international experience involves a series of personal adjustments that students must make in their natural process of migration, which can cause a variety of driving reactions for the permanence or abandonment of the mobility experience. The students were asked if at any point in their stay they had the desire to leave the exchange and it was found (Graph 8) that just over a quarter of the students 14 students did have the desire to leave the exchange (26%), while 39 of them did not (74%). Something to consider is that while 14 students had the desire to leave the experience, none did; although, in addition to being a difficult decision, it is not easy to do so in the face of the institutional representativeness they hold, since during their stay abroad they do not represent themselves, but the university of which they are part. The above note was made that nine students



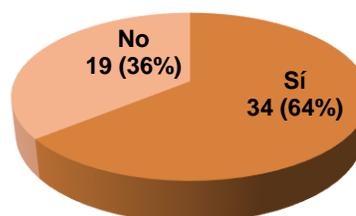
were forced to leave the exchange because of the international reaction of governments to the pandemic, but not because they had the desire to do so.

**Gráfica 8. Deseos de abandonar el intercambio**



On the other hand, for students there is a temptation to stay and live in the

**Gráfica 9. Deseos de quedarse a vivir en el país de intercambio**

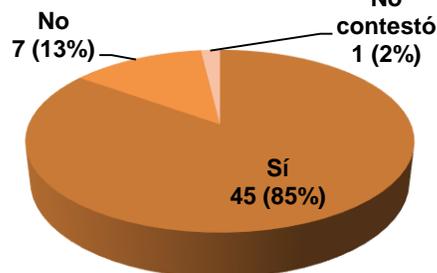


destination country. The conversion of temporary mobility for unlimited

permanence, or the return to the destination country of exchange has happened with a large number of students in the world. In the case of this study, Graph 9 shows that 34 students reported having had desires to stay and live in the exchange country (64%), while 19 students (36%) reported not having had that desire. Later we will see the reasons for this phenomenon.

Presumably, living an international or national mobility experience in person strengthens the identity and belonging to the institution that provided the opportunity to do it, even more so when through it the student obtained an economic resource for that purpose. A question of interest in the research was whether or not the mobility experience strengthened identity and belonging with the university of origin.

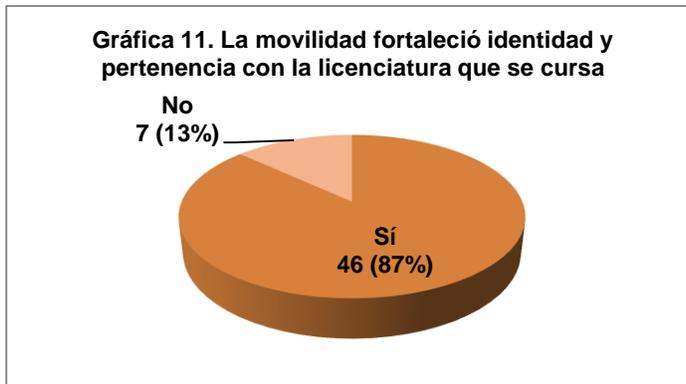
**Gráfica 10. Movilidad fortaleció identidad y pertenencia con la universidad de origen**



The results are that in 45 students (85%), the identity was strengthened, 7 (13%) reported not having strengthened it and 1 (2%) omitted the answer (Graph 10). The categories that support this aspect will be seen in detail later.



The same applies to the career being pursued. The experience of sharing studies related to the bachelor's degree that is studied with young people of other nationalities and cultures supposes an increase in the roots and strengthening of the identity and belonging with the academic program.



Graph 11 shows that for 46 young people (85%) the mobility experience did strengthen them and for 7 it did not (13%). Interestingly, the seven students who responded negatively to the strengthening of identity and belonging with the university of origin and with the bachelor's degree program that is studied, are among the ten students who

did not obtain a university scholarship. A simple conjecture could relate the lack of institutional financial support to the negative expression regarding the strengthening of identity with the university and with the academic program.

Qualitative aspects of the research on the mobility experience will be presented below. Categorized aspects to the responses related to main difficulties experienced, main lessons learned from the experience, desire to leave the exchange, desires to remain in the host country; in addition to those related to the strengthening of identity and belonging to the academic program and the university of origin.

### Difficulties experienced

Performing a mobility experience involves facing and solving a series of difficulties to be solved before, during and when returning from the mobility experience. These difficulties are fundamental in the learning obtained. Students reported having the following predominant difficulties:

- a. Administrative problems consisting of the punctual ignorance of procedures and procedures in the receiving university and lack of follow-up and communication with the university of origin regarding acceptance letters and contact links. Students report the need for close and



- timely follow-up in the procedures, since although they manage to overcome the deficiencies they usually commit due to ignorance, a closer institutional follow-up is necessary.
- b. Financial problems related to the delay in receiving the resources of the scholarship, which forced the students to manage resources with the family or others. Monetary parity, due to the allocation of the scholarship in pesos, not dollars. Cost of living in other countries in relation to lodging, food and services. The respondents commented that if they had known about the delays in the payments of the scholarships, they would have foreseen having the resources that they lacked at the time due to lack of accurate information. They do not know the rules of operation of the budgets and the times of release of the allocated resources, so a more precise information in this aspect would have been very useful to avoid the uncertainty of them and their families and avoid putting the family in the urgency of getting the resources and sending them to them.
  - c. Cultural integration with respect to customs in the ways of thinking and acting of others, the ingredients of food and the schedules of food, communication (senses and meanings of idiomatic expressions), schedules of activities, adaptation to the forms and lifestyles in a strange country and with people of different nationalities and beliefs. According to the informants, the experience of culture shock impacted them at the beginning until they lived, sooner rather than later, the process of adaptation; but, at the same time, it generated in them an understanding and acceptance of differences; in addition to tolerance and openness to the diversity of otherness.
  - d. In addition to the adjustments to personal life that changed them, literally, from one day to the next, an intense process of adaptation to the new way of life and the strange environment of which they were already part came. However, an aspect of strong impact on their emotionality was the feeling of nostalgia for the family, coupled with feelings of loneliness in the distance, despite having accessible media with the palm of the hand thanks to technology. The students commented that it is not known how much you are prepared to live the feelings of nostalgia and loneliness until you live and do not have close to family or friends. On the



- other hand, what helped them overcome these feelings was the emotionality of the novelty and the new friendship relationships that they began to weave with the classmates who also attended the host university or the "roomies" of the house or room they shared. .
- e. Practical difficulties due to the natural ignorance of the destination city. The first difficulty is to get hosting at a distance, which is now much facilitated based on the management of technology, information networks and the use of applications and platforms. Once established in the city, the difficulties are related to the lack of knowledge of routes and means of transport and the location of shopping centers for the acquisition of basic supplies, which they solve through dialogue and gradual knowledge of the environment and the city. Finally, extreme climates with scarce economic resources to face them. The students say that the solidarity between them and the generosity of their classmates helped them on several occasions.
  - f. Entering an educational system different from the one you have been in all your life entails emerging adaptations in the academy, for example, to the modalities of the courses, teaching and didactic styles, norms and criteria of evaluation of the courses. This initial process led the students to consider, based on the perception of the difficulty it cost them to adapt, that the academic level of the receiving university is higher than that of the sending university.
  - g. Finally, a coincidence in the students once they returned from the international experience, was the feeling of nostalgia for the host country. Most expressed wishes to return one day. This feeling of nostalgia is natural in the face of the mixture of memories and emotions for the events lived, the amazement and admiration for the novelties and surprises, the bonds of relationship and friendship with people in similar situations and mixed feelings of joy and sadness for the loss of what was lived.

## Learning

The mobility experience contains not only academic and curricular learning, but, perhaps even more importantly, those who extracurricularly developed in them personal growth skills as a basis for their



professional performance. The students stated that the experience provided them with the following learnings:

- i. Development of a personal and emotional growth that possibly would have taken a few years to obtain. Instead, the experience intensified their maturity and, with it, a better emotional balance.
- ii. Broadening of cultural horizons and the vision of the world. Living in another country and interacting with young people of other nationalities and cultures made them realize that the shortness of horizons reinforces prejudices and cognitive errors. "The world is bigger than the everyday life I live in my country," said one student. One more pointed out: "It opens the panorama for you so you don't stay alone in Guadalajara."
- iii. Personal imbalance of the comfort zone. The international experience broke their schemes and unbalanced their daily lives. It also allowed them to see Mexico from a distance and from other perspectives: "It's valuable to get out of your comfort zone. Realize how bad we've normalized in Mexico," or, "See how [they] see us and try to understand [them]." Knowing the country of origin from a distance served as a reference and confrontation about the normalization of the culture of death that has been imposed on Mexicans.
- iv. Confrontation and overcoming uncertainties. In chapter V of *The seven knowledges necessary for the education of the future*, Edgar Morin (1999), insists on the need to know how to face uncertainties in the diversity of ways in which they are presented. Recognizing the presence of the uncertain and assuming the indefiniteness of open contextual frameworks increased students' self-confidence and strengthened their personal independence.
- v. Related to subsection c of the section on the main difficulties experienced, students see as learning the improvement in their ability to adapt to the new and tolerance of human differences that generate uncertainties before the "certainty" of knowledge. Tolerance is an indispensable learning for the healthy human coexistence that international experience provided them.



- vi. One of the great learnings of living alone is to take personal responsibility in the management of resources. The students claim that they learned to control their variable expenses between personal consumption of food, transportation, tastes and tourism trips in order to survive. Fixed costs were budgeted for sure, but not variable expenses where they had to be more careful.
- vii. Curricular learning related to academic content was also mentioned as an extension of content knowledge about what is studied in other countries in similar careers. In the same way, this learning served as a confrontation with respect to the academic level in Mexico as higher, equal or lower. However, the prevailing assertion was that in universities abroad the academic level is higher than that of the university of origin. Beyond realizing that the academic level of the university is something they cannot directly influence, they expressed that they can commit to their level of personal learning for a better professional training.
- viii. A learning that was repeatedly affirmed in students who were in countries with a language other than Spanish was the improvement of the language as a relevant learning by developing from less to more the fluency of communication skills, *in situ*.

### **Abandon the experience**

As explained above, the experience of international mobility involves experiencing difficulties that may generate desires to leave the experience and return to the country of residence. Graph 8 shows that 14 students responded that they felt like leaving (26%) and 39 that they did not (74%). The reasons of both were the following:

#### **a. Reasons why yes:**

- i. Feelings of loneliness and melancholy at a distance by family and friends, coupled with culture shock and friction with exchange partners.
- ii. Lack of economic resources due to the costs of living and feeling like an economic burden for the family.
- iii. Feeling of not being prepared for the demands of the curriculum.



iv. Food and health problems.

These reasons are classified into emotional, economic and health, but those of an emotional nature predominate. Feelings of loneliness, melancholy, conflict, and insecurity are emotional. The "feeling of not being prepared for the demands of the curriculum", knowing that you do not know or believing that you do not know, causes a feeling of cognitive insecurity and fear of possible exposure to shame, even if it never happens. Even the lack of economic resources can generate emotional alteration in the "feeling of being an economic burden for the family", as some students expressed it, for example. Health problems can be a consequence of emotionality or generate it, or have bidirectional causality. 26% of the participants expressed a desire to abandon the experience, but none of them did. This means that they faced their feelings and overcame their emotionality.

b. **Reasons why not:**

- i. Harmony in the relationship with colleagues and new friends.
- ii. Knowledge of cultural diversity and opportunity to travel to other countries. Daily novel learning.
- iii. Illusion and goal to live the exchange. Do not give up.
- iv. Obligation to reimburse resources for abandonment.
- v. Greater taste for the receiving country than for the country of origin. Feeling of security, friendship and happiness.

In the reasons why they did not want to leave the experience are emotional, cognitive and rational factors. There is emotionality in the harmony of human relationships, the illusion of exchange, the taste for being in a country that also generates the feeling of security, friendship and happiness. There is even emotionality in everyday novel learning. The cognitive factor is manifested in the expression of knowledge by cultural diversity and the opportunity of travel. And the rational factor is shown by the calculation of the reimbursement of resources in the case of leaving the stay.

## **Staying to live in the host country**



In mobility experiences there is usually a fascination with the country in which the stay is temporary, hence the question in this regard. Did you want to stay and live in the host country? Figure 9 shows that 34 students answered yes (64%) and 19 no (36%). The categories found are as follows:

a. **Reasons why yes:**

- i. Greater security, infrastructure in services and quality of life.
- ii. Better opportunities for academic, professional and personal development
- iii. Better salaries than in the country of origin.
- iv. Better academic level than in the country of origin.
- v. Cultural diversity and better social organization.

b. **Reasons why not:**

- i. Climate, food and culture.
- ii. Melancholy for the family and friends of the country of origin.
- iii. Cost of living in recipient countries.

All the answers given are the product of a comparative exercise between the country of origin and the host country in terms of style and quality of life, culture, economy, costs, opportunities for professional development, educational system and social organization among other aspects. Among the most repeated reasons for staying in the host country is the sense of security and opportunities for professional development, which is due to the insecurity experienced in Mexico and the limited offer of professional development compared to the host countries in the exchange. On the other hand, the cost of living, the climate, the different culture, the food and the nostalgia for the country of origin give weight to not staying to live in the country of origin. And it is not a question of whether they stay or not, but of the possibility of social gain that is obtained through the "circulation of brains or gain of brains", as Oppenheimer (2010) calls it when young people go out to study at universities outside the country. The globalized world today offers opportunities for scientific, technological, economic and social development through international student mobility.



## Identity and belonging to the university of origin

International mobility has several edges that are combined in personal experience. It is not only a procedure or only a temporary stay, nor is it a personal experience detached from the institution to which it belongs, but the person and the institution are closely linked, because the students represent the institution during their stay abroad. Hence the question about whether mobility strengthened their identity and belonging to the university of origin. Figure 10 shows that 45 students answered yes (85%), 7 no (13%) and 1 did not answer (2%). The reasons were:

### a. Reasons why yes:

- i. Assumption of university representativeness. You are in another university as an institutional representative of the university of origin and not in a personal capacity. This aspect was clear to the students,
- ii. Assessment of institutional support and support to live the experience, without which it would not have been possible. Students express gratitude to the university for giving them the opportunity for exchange.
- iii. Pride that the university of origin is recognized and admired in other countries. Most of the students openly expressed pride in belonging to the University of Guadalajara.
- iv. Recognition of the academic prestige that the university of origin has in different latitudes of the planet and the existence of international collaboration agreements in favor of students that other national universities do not have.

### b. Reasons why not:

- i. Lack of follow-up and attention to students in mobility from the university of origin. There were students who felt abandoned: "Because I felt alone, not supported by the institution, the truth", "As soon as you leave you "stop" existing for the university, they never care about you and the emails do not answer."
- ii. Other students focus their attention on existing deficiencies in the university of origin, regarding academic level, teaching methods and infrastructure.



## Identity and belonging to the career

Finally, the same previous question was focused on whether mobility was strengthened by identity and belonging to the career or academic program that is studied at the university of origin. 87% answered yes (46 students) and 13% no (7 students). See Figure 11:

### a. Reasons why yes:

- i. He reaffirmed the career that is being studied with the certainty of having been the best choice.
- ii. Acquisition of new knowledge that would not have been obtained without mobility, such as knowledge and expansion of international professional horizons.
- iii. Feel proud to belong to the University of origin.
- iv. Satisfaction with the results of the experience.
- v. Development of personal and professional skills that would not have been achieved without experience, such as self-knowledge, self-control, urgent decisions, improvement of the foreign language, improvement of communicative skills, organization, resource management.
- vi. Assessment of the curriculum of the career at the university of origin.

### b. Reasons why not:

- i. The international context favored career rectification and confirmed a change of professional horizons in seven students.

This last point provides relevant information in two senses: the first is the consolidation and confirmation of the choice of professional vocation, the development of diverse competences and the satisfaction of the opening of professional horizons. Secondly, that international mobility even serves to realize that the career you are studying is not really the one you want to pursue professionally, which implies the rectification of the professional vocation. This act of realizing the need for rectification can also be considered as a success factor and a gain in investment, so it should not be considered as a loss or failure, but as a great learning.



## Conclusions

International mobility is a personal decision consistent with complex series of personal, family and institutional intersections that enable its realization and that this mobility has its origin in an intrinsic motivation of the students who seek, achieve and perform it, in addition to being linked to personal and professional aspirations. On the one hand, they correspond to the relevant motivation for learning and, on the other, to the future project model in which they see themselves in the future.

The set of factors that intervene in the international experience creates new meanings not only of academic life, but of the other areas that make it up. It opens perspectives, modifies attitudes and, therefore, behaviors, which means that in a certain way there is a modification in the perspective of the vision of the world in those who live it.

Mobility is an element of professional training that favors the accelerated development of personal and professional skills, given the urgency of decisions to be taken in the immediate matters to be addressed during the experience. The interaction of cognitive, affective, attitudinal and behavioral processes in the processes experienced by the students is also assumed, so that learning is intensified in each of the areas that make up the processes.

It is recurrent to confirm the statistics that more women than men leave the country to live an experience of international academic mobility. It seems that this is a global phenomenon that in the very near future will enrich the educational field with new visions and perspectives.

This study has the great limitation that for various reasons it did not have the information of the total number of students in mobility, which would have covered the universe of the experience; however, the goal of having at least 50 informants to make the sample more significant was met. There is a vein of continuity in this field.

The predominant age of the students in mobility is 21 and 22 years, which strengthens the personal and professional training of the participants, as well as the curricular updating of the educational programs of the university based on the monitoring and recovery of the academic experiences of international students.



Another vein to investigate is why the destinations of Spanish-speaking countries predominate, even though most of the students at the university center speak English or another language. Perhaps intertwining their hard and soft skills with mastery of a language other than Spanish.

A taboo subject in the area of social sciences and humanities is training for the management of economic resources. Students need to know more about the procedures to manage them, so that they are freed from the feeling of being an economic burden for the family and learn the ways of access to national and international instances for obtaining funds.

Although international mobility has its great advantages for professional training, there are those who argue that it generates a new academic gap of inequality between those who carry it out and those who cannot carry it out or are left out of the opportunity (Ramírez & Ortega, 2018), so it becomes necessary to think about alternatives so that most students can live this experience.

International mobility will have adjustments and adjustments in the context of the pandemic. In the short term, a decrease in face-to-face mobility is expected, but an increase in the internationalization of curriculum virtually and remotely through programs such as eMOVIES, which is the Virtual Mobility Space in Higher Education for students from member institutions of the Inter-American University Organization, OUI (March 18, 2021, <https://oui-iohe.org/es/emovies/>), and NetACTIVE of the Erasmus-Mundus programme for virtual international mobility between students from Latin America and Europe (18 March 2021, [https://ec.europa.eu/programmes/erasmus-plus/about\\_es](https://ec.europa.eu/programmes/erasmus-plus/about_es)).

The increase in international students at the University of Guadalajara makes it necessary to carry out research that accounts for the processes experienced by students before, during and after their international academic experience, as well as the follow-up that is given to them by the internationalization units of the university centers and the Departments where they study the career, whose results impact the areas of opportunity of the professional training of the students.

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