

Holder of a master's degree Jesus Alejandro Echeverry Mendoza: Polytech, Saint Petersburg and the Russian soul

Jesus completed his Master's degree with honors at Peter the Great St. Petersburg Polytechnic University. He spoke about his educational career at the Institute of Energy, which began in his homeland, in Bolivia, and continued at the Polytechnic Graduate School.



— **Why did you decide to come to Russia and choose St. Petersburg Polytechnic University?**

— At the age of 18, I became interested in Russia. Specialists who studied in the USSR are still working in Bolivia, including teachers from my university. I was particularly impressed by the rich history of Russia and its engineering exploits: the first satellite, the first nuclear power plant in Obninsk, and others. After completing my bachelor's degree, I decided it was the time, and I chose St. Petersburg. The city attracted tourists with its culture, theaters and museums. And Polytech became the choice thanks to its centuries — old traditions — after all, the university is already 126 years old!

— **You have received a «red» diploma — this is a great achievement!**

What was the most difficult thing at the beginning of your studies?

— It was difficult for two main reasons. First, knowledge of the language. Russian is considered one of the most difficult languages. After the sub-course, it was still difficult for me to understand all the teachers at once. Over time, the language was mastered. Secondly, there is a big difference in education systems. It was difficult for me to adapt because everything is going differently here. If we talk about the engineering industry, SPbPU has a very practical approach to solving problems.



— Is your specialization at the Institute of Energy?

— My field is the electric power industry. I deliberately chose this broad field because of its versatility and the availability of diverse specializations. After exploring possible development paths, I decided on the areas closest to me: energy ecology, autonomous systems, and renewable energy sources.

— How did you organize your time for effective study? Were there any special methods?

— The main thing is that I wasn't afraid to ask any questions to the teachers. They were always ready to help! I had a great interest in delving into knowledge, and they constantly supported me. The second important aspect is that the study of the Russian language did not stop. I was always interested, asking questions

to my Russian classmates, who eventually became my friends. They were always ready to help, too.



— **Were there any difficulties in communicating with Russian students?**

— Of course, there were difficulties at first. But from the very first days, people came up to me, asking where I was from, asking about Latin America — what we have and what we don't have. That's how the first contacts began. And by the end of my master's degree, I was proud to realize that I had written my thesis in a different language! It was a real challenge that required perseverance and determination. There were moments of desperation when I wanted to give up everything, but I knew that I had to go to the goal.

— **How have you changed during your studies at Polytechnic University?**

— SPbPU has changed me both as a professional and as a person. Thanks to the teachers, I didn't just gain knowledge — I immersed myself in the world of modern technologies and methods of the electric power industry, which I had only heard about before. Now, holding the diploma in my hands, I feel that it is not just a paper, but a confirmation that I have become a real engineer. And life in Russia has taught me much more than textbooks. The St. Petersburg weather and all the difficulties made me stronger in spirit, taught me patience and incredible perseverance. Now I know that to achieve a goal, you need not only a head, but

also a character.



— **If you had known then, on the first day of school, what you know now, what would you recommend to yourself?**

— The advice is simple. Communicate with the locals as intensively as possible from the first day. This is the shortest and most effective way to understand the cultural code, mentality, and real «rules of the game» in Russian studies and life. Knowledge of these nuances — from informal traditions to problem—solving approaches — turned out to be no less important than academic skills.

— **What was the most unexpected or even shocking experience in your life and studies?**

— The education system is what struck me the most! In Bolivia, the bachelor's degree is a base, a foundation without specialization. You become a specialist only in the master's degree program by choosing that very single focus. Everything is different here. You choose a bachelor's degree already! The master's degree is the next level. Can you imagine my surprise? It wasn't easy to adapt! In lectures, teachers sometimes started from the middle, as if we had all missed the first six chapters of a textbook and should immediately understand the seventh.



— **Do you think that an SPbPU degree will give you an advantage in finding employment, whether in Bolivia or another country?**

— Yes, absolutely! Especially in Asia and Latin America. Employers appreciate those who studied in Russia because they know that you have a very practical approach and methods in engineering. Latin America is well aware of St. Petersburg and Polytechnic University. A diploma from this university indicates that a person has acquired deep practical knowledge and is able to solve any engineering problem.

— **What is the main advice or parting words you would give to a future international student entering Polytechnic University?**

— Believe in yourself and be persistent. Applying and studying in another country is a challenge. Your confidence and perseverance will help you overcome any difficulties. Learn Russian is the key. Without a language, it will be difficult to learn, communicate, and make friends. Be interested in culture. Don't be afraid of «seriousness.» Russian people can seem serious and straightforward. But! My experience has shown that there is a real «Russian soul» behind this! They are reliable and always ready to help. The most important thing is to be open, curious, and don't be afraid of new things. Studying at the Polytech is a chance not only to get an excellent education, but also to experience an amazing adventure that will change you.

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