Regional Office in Santiago, Chile

The David Rockefeller Center is part of a bold institutional experiment for Harvard University. In August 2002, Harvard established its first office outside of the United States as a three-year pilot project with a mission to serve all parts of the University in promoting the work that Harvard wants to do in a region of the world. Located in Santiago, Chile, the DRCLAS Regional Office is designed to enhance opportunities for Harvard faculty to carry out their research and collaborative projects, as well as to expand opportunities for Harvard students studying, working or doing research in the five countries served by the Regional Office: Argentina, Bolivia, Chile, Peru and Uruguay.

As part of Lawrence Summers’ first trip to Latin America as President of Harvard, he visited Chile on March 30, 2004, to meet with senior policy makers as well as Harvard faculty, students and alumni, and to give a major public address at the United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean. During the 2003-2004 academic year, the DRCLAS Regional Office organized four Harvard international conferences and more than 20 public events in the region, with another 23 events for Harvard students. The office also hosted 18 Harvard faculty members and staff who were developing new or existing projects. Working closely with Harvard’s Office of International Programs, the Regional Office pioneered the University’s first term-time study abroad program. During the 2003-2004 academic year the number of Harvard students participating in this study abroad program tripled from four to twelve.

The Regional Office also joined with the Harvard Medical School (HMS) to establish a new two-month program in Intensive Spanish and International Service Learning in Santiago for HMS students. The Regional Office collaborated with the Harvard School of Public Health to launch a new three-week winter course on Public Health Policy Reform in Chile in January 2004. From July 2003 to June 2004, more than 80 Harvard students participated in academic programs, internship or research opportunities in Argentina, Bolivia, Chile, Peru and Uruguay. The Regional Office has also worked closely with Harvard alumni organizations in the region.

Activities connected with the Regional Office vary widely, from Harvard astronomers studying the stars atop the Andes with some of the world’s most powerful telescopes in the world, to
Harvard architects and urban planners designing innovative low-cost housing. The May-June 2004 issue of Harvard Magazine profiled this work in an eight-page article on Tying Knots: Glimpsing Global Harvard in Chile. This DRCLAS Regional Office experiment in Santiago also raises an important set of questions about the future of internationalization at Harvard. As the Regional Office completes its two-year anniversary, there is a formal review planned to help determine the future status of the Office beyond its initial three-year mandate. In the process, it may also help define some of the ways that Harvard can have an impact in the world and bring back those experiences most successfully to the University.