

BUILDING BRIDGES

We Make Things Happen

BY MARCELA RENTERÍA

THE DAVID ROCKEFELLER CENTER for Latin American Studies (DRCLAS) celebrated its 20th anniversary in May 2014 during the annual meeting in Cambridge of the DRCLAS Advisory Committee. In a memorable gala, Harvard University President Drew Faust spoke about DRCLAS' positive impact across the University and throughout Latin America, all of which has been made possible by David Rockefeller, the mastermind in the creation of DRCLAS. In a powerful speech at the gala, David Rockefeller shared his original vision when establishing the Center, and emphasized the importance of students having an international experience. In addition, during this celebratory weekend, former Harvard University President Neil Rudenstine and past and present DRCLAS Directors John Coatsworth, Merilee Grindle and Brian Farrell participated in a panel discussion on the history of the Center and its accomplishments in the past 20 years. "The Center has far exceeded—in every conceivable way—all the original purposes and goals that we had imagined at its beginning! I'm especially impressed, not simply by the range of projects undertaken, but by the number of 'outposts' we now have in various countries. I will remember when we began in Chile, wondering whether it

would succeed," remarked Neil Rudenstine after his visit.

The DRCLAS Regional Office (RO) opened its doors in 2002 in Santiago Chile to serve Harvard faculty, students and staff from across the University, becoming the first Harvard overseas office. During more than a decade, the Regional Office has developed long-lasting relationships, built connections and worked in multidisciplinary, collaborative and ongoing projects with a diverse array of partners, including universities, non-profit and private organizations, ministries, local governments, and local community groups. These synergies have resulted in long-term innovative and cutting edge programs with major impact at Harvard and in the region.

A clear example of the Regional Office's collaborative endeavors in the region is Recupera Chile, a multidisciplinary program that focuses on post-disaster recovery. Established in 2011 in collaboration with the Harvard Kennedy School, Harvard Medical School and Harvard Graduate School of Design, Recupera Chile brings together in strong coalitions Harvard faculty, alumni and students, and local academic institutions, and private and public sector organizations. Currently, Recupera Chile is developing international col-

laborations through the new initiative, Farmers of the Sea, which aims to support small-scale aquaculture projects and help recover the coast of Chile from the 2010 tsunami. "The strong partnerships across interests, professions, disciplines, universities and between people from different countries has made Recupera Chile possible," remarks HMS Professor Judy Palfrey, one of the project's leaders.

The Regional Office not only nurtures existing partnerships, it also facilitates the creation of new ones. This past October, the School of Engineering and Applied Sciences and Peru's new technological university, UTEC, signed a historic agreement to establish collaborations in research, innovations in engineering education, and student programs. The Regional Office will be key in supporting the development of that alliance throughout the upcoming years.

Due to its on-the-ground presence, the Regional Office also makes a difference through a wide array of year-round programs in the region for Harvard undergraduates and graduate students, in collaboration with Harvard faculty across the University and local universities. Since its founding, the Regional Office has hosted 1,129 students in academic term studies, internships, clinical

rotations, community and public service, and independent research. Our student blog is a testimony of the transformative experiences our students undergo. However, the Regional Office's impact on students does not end at their graduation. When Andrea Rolla finished her doctorate degree at the Harvard Graduate School of Education, she collaborated in the creation of Un Buen Comienzo (UBC), a multiyear project designed to improve the quality of preschool education in Chile. Rolla reflects, "Without leadership and support from the RO, the project would not have begun. They provide a sounding board for innovation and help get new ideas off the ground, with the conviction that sustainable change will be created... Thousands of at-risk children have benefitted from this."

As we look forward into the future, the Regional Office will continue making a difference by facilitating projects and building collaborations that won't happen unless there is a physical Harvard presence in the region. This is a reality not only in Chile, but also in Argentina, Bolivia, Colombia, Peru and Uruguay, the countries that the Regional Office primarily serves.

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