

BIOMEDICAL INNOVATION COMES FULL CIRCLE

By integrating scientific discovery, entrepreneurship and public outreach, a non-profit foundation aims to put Chile on the biotechnology map.

Pablo Valenzuela had already created one of the world's largest biotechnology firms in the United States when, in 1996, he turned to his native Chile, where — together with Bernardita Méndez and Mario Roseblatt — he created the *Fundación Ciencia & Vida* (Science & Life Foundation), a Santiago-based non-profit institute dedicated to improving the social and economic development of Chile through biomedical research, entrepreneurship and education.

"We wanted to help the country do something important and different," says Valenzuela, now scientific director of *Ciencia & Vida*.

The idea from the outset was

to create a bridge institution. They started by building up the institute's research capacity and creating a technology transfer office. A PhD program in biotechnology in alliance with *Universidad Andrés Bello* soon followed, as did the consolidation of a science and business park, an educational program and a scientific exchange with the *University of California San Francisco*.

Before long, they realized, *Ciencia & Vida* had become an integrated platform for research discovery, advanced training, global science, entrepreneurship and outreach. "What we were doing was leveraging science in every one of its aspects," says Méndez, president of the institute. They took their lead

from the approach in naming it *Science 360°*.

Today, *Ciencia & Vida* includes around 130 scientists working in 12 research labs in biomedicine, bio-resources and computational biology. This forms the backbone of the *Science 360°* model, says Mario Roseblatt, executive director. "We can only do everything else because we have good science." Today the institute is a national scientific centre of excellence and receives public funding from national agencies such as *CONICYT* and *Corfo*.

"We are strongly committed to building a scientific culture in Chile," says Carolina Torrealba, director of special projects. The institute's science

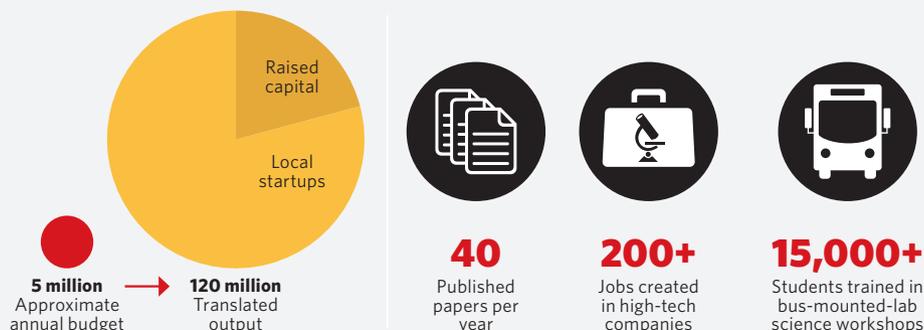
dissemination materials range from TV documentaries and animated TV series to video games and books. The institute also runs science workshops for key opinion leaders and is home to a bus-mounted educational lab in collaboration with *Fundación Ecoscience*.

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Fifteen companies have set up shop on *Ciencia & Vida*'s science and business campus, including three international firms and 10 homegrown biotech startups, some of which were founded by graduates of the PhD program. According to Cristián Hernández, director of entrepreneurship and business development at *Ciencia & Vida*, all this has been achieved with an annual budget of less than US\$5 million. "We have been able to accomplish a lot with very little," he remarks. ■

BY THE NUMBERS

FUNDACIÓN CIENCIA & VIDA knows how to translate budget into impact.



Fundación Ciencia & Vida