

History of the MSI

The Millennium Science Initiative came into being over the course of several years, building on the rich history of previous attempts to build S&T capacity in the developing world. These attempts have included programs of the [Third World Academy of Sciences](#), [UNESCO](#), [ICSU](#), the [European Union](#), private foundations, Scandinavian aid organizations, and [The World Bank](#).

The specific concept for the MSI represents the confluence of two initiatives. First, in 1997, World Bank president James Wolfensohn was exploring ways in which the Bank might incorporate science and technology into its development strategy. Mr. Wolfensohn, who also chairs the Board of Trustees of the Institute for Advanced Study in Princeton, New Jersey, sought the advice of Institute director Phillip Griffiths.

Meanwhile, the leaders of some of South America's Mercosur countries - Presidents Frei of Chile, Cardoso of Brazil, and Menem of Argentina - discussed their desire to build S&T capacity at a summit meeting in the fall of 1997. Each president was approaching the end of his term, and they all agreed that they would try to leave as a legacy of their terms the basis for strengthened scientific capacity in their countries and the broader Southern Cone region. The Science Advisor to the President of Chile was, by coincidence, a part-time Member of the Institute for Advanced Study in Princeton. He approached Dr. Griffiths to discuss ways in which his President's objective might be realized.

These approaches came together in a major [Convocation in Santiago, Chile, in 1998](#), supported by the Government of Chile and the [Carnegie Corporation of New York](#), where the basis for the Millennium Science Initiative was formulated by an international panel of leading scientists, government officials, representatives of the private sector, and Bank officials. The first concrete result was the formal implementation of an [MSI in Chile](#).

The [Science Initiative Group \(SIG\)](#) was established in 1999 to ensure adequate representation of the international scientific community in the MSI, to provide scientific guidance, and to coordinate the efforts of the many groups whose participation is essential for successful [program implementation](#).