Policy 1.09

POLICY GUIDELINES FOR CENTERS, INSTITUTES, CONSORTIA, AND SPECIAL INITIATIVES
AT THE CITY UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK
[Revised on October 12, 2020]

In The City University of New York (the “University”) -- as in most institutions of higher education -- the normal locus for instruction and research is the academic department. Additional instruction, including continuing education programs and experiential learning, can be delivered through centers, institutes, consortia, and special initiatives. These organizations play an important role in the University's endeavors by meeting needs which fall outside the customary domains of academic departments. Since these organized research, instruction, and training initiatives do not operate under the established rules and regulations which govern departments, it is desirable and even necessary to set policy guidelines to provide for their orderly administration.

Centers, institutes, consortia, and special initiatives should supplement, not supplant, activities of academic and administrative departments. They may offer more opportunities for organized research for the benefit of faculty, students, and communities surrounding the colleges. Consequently, these entities are prohibited from duplicating functions of, or exercising routine prerogatives of, academic and administrative departments. In particular, they are not to be viewed as alternate routes to faculty appointments.

Specifically, centers, institutes, consortia, and special initiatives and the attendant personnel are explicitly debarred from: (1) offering regular courses, (2) conferring degrees, (3) appointing faculty members through their agency alone or without adequate faculty consultation, and (4) conferring tenure or providing certificates of continuous employment.

Organized research, training and instruction, and service units are expected to operate with substantial external support to advance the mission of the University beyond what is possible to accomplish through the basic institutional budget. While tax-levy support, direct or indirect, for centers, institutes, consortia and special initiatives is not prohibited, it should be viewed as an aid to developing external support, when available, and never as a guarantee. If available and provided, tax-levy support from the University is usually, but not always, limited in duration and extent.

Centers, institutes, consortia, and other special initiatives carry out their diverse missions in a multitude of ways. Funding comes from the federal, State, and City governments, and private foundations.

Recognizing that the terms “center” and “institute” are used by many inside and outside the University to denote a variety of entities, this policy distinguishes between the title by which an entity is known and its designation by the college and/or the University, as the case may be, pursuant to this policy. For the purposes of this policy, a center is a single-campus entity
and institutes and consortia are multi-campus entities. A center is subject to the direct authority of the president of its host college. Institutes and consortia are subject to the direct authority of the Chancellor, although each consortium is administered by an advisory board. As part of the University, all centers, institutes and consortia are subject to the ultimate authority of the Board of Trustees.

A center, institute, consortium, or a special initiative of the University is an organizational entity other than an academic, continuing education, or administrative department, conducting research, instruction, training, service, or other activity which -- by its nature, methods of operation, or sources of funding -- requires recognition as an entity outside regular structures. The purposes of centers, institutes, consortia and special initiatives may be described as follows:

- **Research**: Centers, institutes, and consortia are vehicles for interdisciplinary research, thematic research that unites sub-disciplines within an academic discipline, or special projects of limited duration.

- **Training and Instruction**: Groups whose educations do not fall within the academic curriculum or continuing education programs of the University and are not applicable towards a degree can be brought together in campus-based centers or University-wide institutes that offer non-credit instruction that is more narrowly focused or of shorter duration than the customary curriculum.

- **Service to the Surrounding Community**: It is appropriate for the University or a campus to offer non-instructional services to the outside community, including government, based on its expertise in academic disciplines.

Regardless of its actual title or name, each such entity must be formally designated as one of the mutually exclusive types described in Section 1 of this policy and follow all approval, financing, and accountability requirements, for that designation. The Office of Academic Affairs will maintain a current list of all approved entities with their formal designation and will make this list publicly available via a central web-based repository.

### 1. Definitions

**Centers**

A center is an organized unit of a single college of the University whose mission is to sponsor, coordinate, and promote research, training, instruction, and/or service, in order to enrich and support the core mission of the college. Centers shall not duplicate or substantially compete with the mission of University-wide institutes, consortia, or special initiatives.

**Institutes**

An institute is an organized unit of the University staffed, supported, and governed by
multiple colleges of the University, and/or the central office, under the leadership of a primary college and/or the central office, whose mission is (i) to sponsor, coordinate, and promote research, training, instruction, and/or service and (ii) to enhance by collaboration the University's strength in specific areas, in order to enrich and support the core mission of the University. New institutes shall not duplicate, substantially overlap with, or subsume the mission of existing institutes, consortia, or special initiatives.

Consortia

A consortium is an organized unit of the University formed by several colleges, institutes and/or centers, whose mission is to coordinate the efforts of its individual components and in which no single component leads. New consortia shall not duplicate, substantially overlap, or subsume the mission of existing institutes, consortia, or special initiatives.

Special Initiatives

Occasionally, the University has a special opportunity or is specially requested to serve the City, State, or nation in projects which do not fall within any of the above categories. The University may then initiate an activity it hopes will grow into a center or institute or which may remain limited in duration and scope. Such projects are called University special initiatives, and -- while their form and function cannot be fully anticipated in sufficient detail to provide specific regulations for their conduct -- by recognizing the possibility of these endeavors in this policy the Board of Trustees of the University indicates, in general terms, its support of special initiatives and affirms the legitimacy of their role in University affairs.

2. Approval Processes

Centers

A proposal to create a new center at a college requires approval at the college and University levels. Each college shall follow any applicable local approval process for creation of new centers consistent with its established governance plan. The process should include a recommendation from the college governance body.

At the University level, the process will consist of the following elements:

a) The participating colleges shall provide to the Office of Academic Affairs a proposal that incorporates:

   i. A strategic plan for the proposed center that includes:
      • A mission statement
      • A plan of operations
      • An assessment plan
      • A funding plan that specifies how the center will sustain its activities and operations
ii. A justification for the creation of the center — including local, regional, and national significance of the contributions the center is intended to make — as well as its relationship, if any, to existing centers and institutes at the University and within the City and State of New York

iii. Assurance that the center does not duplicate, substantially overlap, or subsume the mission of existing centers, institutes, consortia, or special initiatives except when the explicit purpose of establishing the center is to replace existing structures

iv. A staffing plan for the center, with which the college president formally concurs, that includes an organizational chart, curriculum vitae of proposed staff members, and letters of endorsement from individuals and organizations outside the University. Directors will be appointed for five-year terms, except that directors who are subject to annual reappointments in their underlying CUNY job title and are not reappointed in that title will no longer serve as directors upon their separation from employment. Unless directly specified by college governance rules, directors of centers will serve a maximum of two five-year terms. Additional five-year terms may be requested by a letter from the college president explaining the rationale for the request. All directors should be evaluated every three years with respect to their service as director, but shall also be subject to the applicable evaluation provisions of the PSC/CUNY collective bargaining agreement.

b) The Office of Academic Affairs will review the proposal and make recommendations to the Committee on Academic Policy, Programs, & Research (CAPPR) on the approval or disapproval of the proposed center.

**Institutes**

A proposal to create a new institute at the University requires approvals at the college and University levels. Participating colleges will determine the process by which individual college approval is conferred, but the process should include approval of the college's governance bodies and substantial consultation with faculty.

At the University level, the process will consist of the following elements:

a) The participating colleges shall provide to the Office of Academic Affairs a proposal that incorporates:

i. A strategic plan for the proposed institute that includes:
   - Designation of a primary college and the basis for participation by other campuses, as well as the structure of any advisory board and/or steering committee. (Some institutes may be dual reporting entities, reporting both to the college president where the institute is located and to the Chancellor.)
   - A mission statement
   - A plan of operations
   - An assessment plan
   - A funding plan for the institute that specifies how the institute will sustain its activities and operations

ii. Letters of support from all participating presidents
iii. A justification for the creation of the institute -- including local, regional, and national significance of the contributions the institute is intended to make -- as well as its relationship, if any, to existing centers and institutes at the University and within the City and State of New York

iv. Assurance that the institute does not duplicate, substantially overlap, or subsume the mission of existing centers, institutes, consortia, or special initiatives except when the explicit purpose of establishing the institute is to replace existing structures

v. A staffing plan, for the institute, with which the president of the primary college formally concurs, that includes an organizational chart, curriculum vitae of proposed staff members, and letters of endorsement from individuals and organizations outside the University. Directors will be appointed for terms of five years, except that directors who are subject to annual reappointments in their underlying CUNY job title and are not reappointed in that title will no longer serve as directors upon their separation from employment. Unless directly specified by college governance rules, directors of institutes will serve a maximum of two five-year terms. Additional five-year terms may be requested by a letter from the college president explaining the rationale for the request. All directors should be evaluated every three years with respect to their service as director, but shall also be subject to the applicable evaluation provisions of the PSC/CUNY collective bargaining agreement.

b) The Office of Academic Affairs will review the proposal and make recommendations to the Committee on Academic Policy, Programs, & Research (CAPPR) on the approval or disapproval of the proposed institute

Consortia

A proposal to establish a new consortium at the University will require approvals at the University level. The process will consist of the following elements:

a) The participating colleges shall provide to the Office of Academic Affairs a proposal incorporating:

i. A strategic plan for the proposed consortium that includes:
   • A description of the management structure, including the membership of the advisory board
   • A mission statement
   • A plan of operations
   • An assessment plan
   • A funding plan for the consortium that specified how the consortium will sustain its activities and operations
ii. Letters of support from the presidents of all participating colleges

iii. A justification for the establishment of the consortium -- including local, regional, and national significance of the contributions the consortium is intended to make -- as well as its relationship to existing institutes and centers at the University and within the City and State of New York

iv. Assurance that the proposed consortium does not duplicate, substantially overlap, or subsume the mission of an existing institute, consortium, or special initiative

v. A staffing plan for the consortium, with which the presidents of the participating colleges formally concur, that includes an organizational chart, curriculum vitae of proposed staff members, and letters of endorsement from individuals and organizations outside the University. Directors will be appointed for terms of five years, except that directors who are subject to annual reappointments in their underlying CUNY job title and are not reappointed in that title will no longer serve as directors upon their separation from employment. Unless directly specified by college governance rules, directors of consortia will serve a maximum of two five-year terms. Additional five-year terms may be requested by a letter from the college presidents explaining the rationale for the request. All directors should be evaluated every three years with respect to their service as director, but shall also be subject to the applicable evaluation provisions of the PSC/CUNY collective bargaining agreement.

b) The Office of Academic Affairs will review the proposal and make recommendations to the Committee on Academic Policy, Programs, & Research (CAPPR) on the approval or disapproval of the proposed consortium.

Special Initiatives

Since the exact form of special initiatives cannot be anticipated, it shall be left to the Chancellor to bring them to the attention of the Board of Trustees in a manner appropriate to their structure, function, and financial requirements. However, since the structure of special initiatives is not specified in advance, it is important that special care be taken to ensure that special initiatives adhere strictly to the limitations made explicit in this policy.

3. Financial and Other Matters

3.1 Financing

Centers
Centers, as college-based entities, will generally be funded through a combination of external sponsored program funds and college-based support. It is University policy that direct or indirect tax-levy support for centers should be limited in extent and duration so that it does not constitute a burden on the instructional budget of colleges. While occasional central tax-levy support for college-based centers is allowed, as a rule, colleges should expect to support centers within their own budgets, from sponsored programs, and with external fundraising where appropriate. Centers shall also hire staff through the college’s established hiring processes for faculty and staff and enforce term limits (a maximum of two five-year terms) for directors.

Institutes and Consortia

Given the anticipated scale of their operations and the magnitude of institutional commitments they carry, institutes and consortia are appropriate loci for major investments of tax-levy monies. The University expects that institutions and consortia will aim to become fiscally self-sufficient through external fundraising and that tax-levy support, when provided, will be limited in duration and extent and over time matched by substantial amounts of non-tax-levy monies. Proposals for the creation of new institutes or consortia shall include in their documentation a fiscal plan indicating the need for matching funds and a timetable for attaining all funding goals.

3.2 University Policies

As part of the University, all centers, institutes and consortia and their staff are subject to the policies and procedures of the University, and the colleges as applicable, including without limitation the University’s policies on naming, procurement, property management, use of computer resources, sexual misconduct, workplace violence, and contract signing authority.

3.3 Fundraising

Centers, institutes and consortia are expected and encouraged to seek sources of non-tax-levy funds. Consistent with the University’s Foundation Guidelines, these entities should work with their affiliated college foundations when seeking donations and other general program support from individuals and entities, rather than setting up a separate fundraising entity.

3.4 Sponsored Programs and Grants

As with academic departments and other parts of the University, the Research Foundation of The City University of New York shall administer research grants and sponsored project funding for centers, institutes and consortia.

4 Accountability

4.1 Centers, Institutes and Consortia
At the end of each fiscal year, the colleges (for centers and institutes), and advisory boards (for consortia), shall make publicly available via the colleges’ websites and a central online repository created by the Office of Academic Affairs, for informational purposes, a report from each center, institute, and consortium. The report shall contain:

a) The mission of the center, institute, or consortium

b) The college president’s attestation of the continuing value of the center or institute, or the attestation of the consortium’s advisory board of the continuing value of the consortium, and the role of the center, institute, or consortium in enriching and supporting the core mission of the college or the University

c) The director's statement of the center’s, institute's or consortium’s current progress toward meeting the goals stated in the strategic plan

d) The center’s, institute's or consortium's staffing plan, with which the participating college presidents formally concur, and a report regarding the status of directors, given their term limits

e) A description of current and projected activities

f) A current and projected budget including individual project budgets, a tax-levy budget showing expenditures of these funds, a chart indicating the sources of staff and faculty salaries, and a plan that specifies how the center, institute, or consortium will aim to sustain its activities and operations

If, on the basis of the published report, questions arise concerning the viability, governance, or mandate of a specific center, institute, or consortium, the Office of the Executive Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs will seek clarification from the president of the appropriate college (for centers or institutes) or the advisory board (for consortia).

4.2 Special Initiatives

The Chancellor shall from time to time as deemed appropriate or at the request of the Board of Trustees report to the Board on the status and progress of special initiatives.

5. Evaluation

Centers, institutes and consortia shall be evaluated every five years. The University will assess the success of the center, institute or consortium in meeting its stated goals, including the effectiveness of the entity, if appropriate, as a University-wide entity. The college presidents, regarding centers and institutes at their colleges, and the advisory boards of consortia, shall coordinate the evaluation process per the entity’s existing assessment plan. The evaluation shall include a self-evaluation report and a report by at least two outside evaluators along with a summary of financial support and investments and progress toward
fiscal self-sufficiency, which shall be given substantial weight in the evaluation. Continuation of University-level support of an institute or consortium will be dependent on successful achievement and reasonable progress toward an appropriate level of non-tax-levy support. Evaluation reports shall be submitted to the Office of the Executive Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs, which shall prepare a summary of the evaluations and submit it to the Chancellor for review and appropriate action. (BTM, 1995, 02-27, 005, _B. Amended: BTM, 2020, 12-14, 5, C. )