

University Senate

Proposed: February 5, 2016

Adopted: February 5, 2016

**RESOLUTION TO ESTABLISH AN  
INSTITUTE FOR IDEAS AND IMAGINATION  
(COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY)**

WHEREAS, our rapidly changing global society makes it desirable for the academy to question the established ways of defining and organizing knowledge, and

WHEREAS, the Institute aspires to provide a platform from which current intellectual habits and ideas can be assessed and measured against the academy's contemporary needs, and

WHEREAS, the Institute will challenge the siloization of academia by bringing scholars and creative artists together to incubate the most promising researchers, artists and writers at an early stage in their careers, and

WHEREAS, the Institute, based at Columbia's Global Center at Reid Hall in Paris, will not only draw on longstanding ties locally and nationally but on the interactions of its guiding faculty with universities, institutes and cultural centers worldwide with the potential for close interaction with Africa, the Middle East and South Asia in particular, and

WHEREAS, the Institute will host 14 residential fellows selected each year through a competitive process from applicants representing the humanities, humanistic social sciences, creative arts and conceptually-driven sciences, approximately seven from Columbia and seven from institutions outside the U.S.; Columbia faculty will also be present as short-term fellows, and

WHEREAS, the Institute will not only host workshops and conferences organized by the fellows, it will partner parallel events around the world, taking advantage of Columbia's network of eight Global Centers, and

WHEREAS, the President has authorized and the Education Committee of the Senate has favorably reviewed the proposal,

**THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED** that the University Senate approve the establishment of the proposed Institute.

Proponent: Education Committee

**COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY**  
**INSTITUTE FOR IDEAS AND IMAGINATION**

**Description and Rationale**

The proposed INSTITUTE FOR IDEAS AND IMAGINATION, housed within the Columbia Global Centers|Europe will be an incubator of innovative ideas and advance President Lee C. Bollinger's agenda of making Columbia University a global leader in humanities-driven thought responsive to the changing conditions of the contemporary world. A University-wide academic organization, the INSTITUTE will host a total of fifteen fellows\*, bringing together faculty from Columbia University with brilliant creative thinkers from around world, including Africa, Asia, the Middle East, Latin America and South Asia. It will challenge the siloisation of academia by bringing scholars and creative artists side by side and it will serve as a seedbed of opportunity for the most promising younger researchers, artists and writers at an early stage in their careers. Based in Paris, it will be tightly and purposefully integrated from the outset into the activities of the University.

This proposal to establish the INSTITUTE is made in response to a rapidly changing global society that makes it desirable for the academy to question the established ways in which it has defined and organized knowledge. The INSTITUTE aspires to provide a platform from which current intellectual habits and ideas can be assessed and measured against the academy's contemporary needs. Such activity is not only essential to the vitality of the University; it is also necessary more broadly to deepen the reciprocal intellectual interaction between American academia and thought traditions from around the world.

The ending of the Cold War, and more evidently perhaps the 2008 financial crisis, revealed the parochialism and inertial forces that limit the intellectual output and disciplinary approaches characteristic of American academia. Even great universities that pride themselves on their capacity for innovation and their responsiveness to the world's policy challenges have found it hard to shake themselves up, to foster new habits of thought in established departments, or to fundamentally rethink the implications of other thought traditions for their own organization of knowledge and teaching. The INSTITUTE will be distinguished by its providing a space for such a foundational type of enquiry: one that examines the basic epistemic categories that shape how contemporary problems are understood and defined; and that fertilizes the emergence of new ideas that will shape the practice of scholars, teachers, writers and

\*There will be fourteen long-term fellows and one short-term fellow at any given time.

citizens. The aspirations and the output of the INSTITUTE will allow Columbia to take a leading role in this reinvigoration of academia, both in the US and abroad, at a time when neither the long-standing hegemony of American power nor the standing of humanities worldwide can any longer be taken for granted.

The INSTITUTE'S location in Paris, an international hub easily accessible to the US and to other regions of the world, is a major asset in establishing it as a forum of global research and creativity. It draws not only on long-standing ties locally and nationally but also on the interactions of its guiding faculty with universities, institutes and cultural centers in Europe, Africa, the Middle East, South America, and South and East Asia: ease of transportation means that the potential exists for especially close interaction with Africa, the Middle East and South Asia in particular. The Institute will not only host fellows and the workshops and conferences they wish to organize there; it will also partner parallel events around the world, taking advantage of Columbia's network of eight Global Centers<sup>1</sup>.

There is also an unrivalled network of academic resources that will ensure robust intellectual and pedagogic feedback to Columbia's main campus in New York City's Morningside Heights neighborhood: these include the School of Arts and Sciences which has pledged to underwrite two full faculty fellowships at the INSTITUTE; Columbia College, with which the INSTITUTE will run workshops on the pedagogic implications for the Global Core of its fellows' work – the chair of the committee on the global core curriculum will be invited to become an ex officio member of the Executive Committee of the INSTITUTE; and the Heyman Center and the Society of Fellows, which are able to house jointly organized events to showcase fellows and their work, and will provide an intellectual home in New York for post-doctoral fellows and other visitors from the INSTITUTE. The Society of Fellows in particular plans to offer a second year at Columbia for three post-doctoral fellows from the INSTITUTE: the idea is that these Global Fellows will teach in the Global Core in their second, NY-based year, and participate alongside the other Fellows at the Society in its intellectual activities, thereby not only enriching the life of Columbia undergraduates but allowing these Global Fellows an unparalleled opportunity to familiarize themselves with the US academic system. Through these and other linkages, the work done at the INSTITUTE will have a transformative pedagogic impact upon the larger University and its ability to shape society and confront common problems more effectively.

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<sup>1</sup> Amman, Beijing, Istanbul, Mumbai, Nairobi, Rio de Janeiro, Santiago [Chile]

During the initial planning phase for the INSTITUTE, a comprehensive survey of all relevant centers for advanced study in the European Union was commissioned and it became clear that nothing precisely equivalent to the INSTITUTE exists. In its global epistemic commitment, its bringing together of US and non-US based fellows in a US institution housed abroad, in its melding of scholarly research with the creative arts and its emphasis on supporting younger scholars and writers, it is unique. Half a century ago, the Paris-based Maison des Sciences de l'Homme, founded by Fernand Braudel, transformed ways of looking at the world on both sides of the Atlantic. Today, the Institute for New Economic Thinking seeks to challenge existing paradigms within economics and make the subject more pertinent. The proposed INSTITUTE aspires to the cross-disciplinary range of the former and to the engagement with the present embodied by the latter. What distinguishes it from both are the advantages it will reap from forming an organic part of a great research university with a core commitment to humanistic learning and pedagogy in its widest possible global context.

### **Major Activities and Division of Responsibilities**

The INSTITUTE will aim to generate intellectual innovation across multiple fields through the activities of a total of fourteen residential fellows who will each year be selected through a competitive process from applicants representing the humanities, humanistic social sciences, creative arts and conceptually-driven sciences. There will be approximately seven fellows from Columbia and seven from non-U.S. institutions; and preference will be given to those at an early stage in their careers as scholars, writers and creative artists. Columbia faculty will also contribute to the life of the INSTITUTE as short-term fellows.

Especial thought, based on extensive faculty input, is already being given to the means of identifying and recruiting brilliant fellows from non-US institutions. It will be a priority of the Director to develop a recruitment strategy with the assistance of faculty colleagues to broaden the range of applications in terms of background and epistemological orientation in order to overcome the factors that often militate against the selection of non-US, non-standard candidates in fellowship competitions. Conversations to develop such a strategy have already begun through a series of meetings with faculty. By the end of the year approximately 50-100 Columbia faculty with worldwide contacts of their own will have been brought into these discussions [see Appendix].

An on-campus Selection Committee will be established and authorized to select all residential fellows for the INSTITUTE through a competitive process. The Committee will consist of the INSTITUTE Director and four other members drawn partly from the University and partly from outside it. The Committee will be advised in its deliberations by expert readers who will make an initial determination of the merits of each application.

Applications for residential fellowships from scholars, writers and those in the creative arts will be invited through an RFP process. Fellowships may be held for one or two semesters and the working language of the INSTITUTE will be English. Fellows will be expected to remain in residence in Paris for the duration of their fellowship and to participate fully in the life of the INSTITUTE including conducting their own work, and participating in seminars. There will also be opportunities to host workshops and conferences and to teach Columbia students. Applications will be considered from those working in any area of the humanities, the humanistic social sciences and conceptual dimensions of the natural and applied sciences as well as visual artists, filmmakers, writers and other creative thinkers. Recent PhDs will be eligible and applications from non-US based applicants will be solicited.

The responsibilities of the fellows will include

- Regular presence at the Institute during their fellowship term and participation in the collective life of the INSTITUTE
- Delivering one public lecture or workshop during their time at the INSTITUTE
- Participating in symposia, colloquia, and workshops
- Providing at the end of the fellowship, a written account of the Institute fellowship experience and communicating the results of any research or creative work undertaken there
- Participating in a seminar on the implications of their work for the undergraduate curriculum

Although fellowships will be awarded on an individual basis, collaborative work will be encouraged, emerging from the Fellows' exchanges. Inter-disciplinarity is expected to grow from conversations and joint seminars, workshops and other activities, leading to research and artistic projects that reflect diversity and originality. Funds will be available to support such projects during and after the fellows' residence. The critical

point will be to curate brilliance and intellectual innovation by creating a community of INSTITUTE fellows from a wide array of different fields. This community will be enriched by the additional presence of short-term fellows drawn from the Columbia faculty who will be provided with funds for stays of up to a week to conduct research and organize seminars and workshops. We envisage approximately five to six such visitors annually.

Since creative artists, writers and performers are increasingly essential to the formation of new forms of knowledge, the INSTITUTE will encourage collaboration across the creative arts and scholarly disciplines. Here are a few examples for the purpose of illustration: we might wish to explore the relationship between ideas and location, questioning prevailing philosophical models and disciplinary methods which prioritise timeless and universal truths, by bringing together philosophers, area studies theorists, cultural anthropologists and other social scientists with contemporary young photographers and film-makers whose work tackles the same issue but in different media. Ongoing research into questions of the translatability of scientific insights across languages and cultures responds to a similar set of concerns. Another critical area concerns the relationship between ideas of the economy and systems of moral values: the very specific trajectory taken by the discipline of economics in the postwar US academy, increasingly detached from its origins in moral philosophy, now looks like only one of a set of possible epistemic paths when set against the way thinking about economics has evolved elsewhere, whether mediated through the impact of socialism in India, idealism in Italy, or the interaction with notions of shari'ah in Muslim societies; the entire Western bifurcation of discussions of money and ethics, dating back to the mid-nineteenth century if not earlier, is now ripe for questioning. Paris has for some years now housed an innovative cross-disciplinary workshop on the idea of money, convened by a leading anthropologist of West African society. A third potential space of enquiry would look at the whole question of the changing meanings of the human. It is hardly necessary to underscore either the importance of this, with contemporary developments in fields as disparate as military robotics and civil rights. In an appendix we list some of the Columbia faculty currently engaged in these and other debates; many of these scholars have already contributed to shaping the conception of the INSTITUTE.

And since what is especially important is to initiate conversations and collaboration among younger scholars and artists, both because they often have the most interesting ideas and because they are the most vulnerable being marginalized by departmentally-

entrenched conceptions of the mainstream, the INSTITUTE aims to ensure that while preserving a full age spectrum across its fellowship, it provides a sufficient number of fellowships to post-doctoral researchers and early career fellows. At present we intend that of the fourteen residential fellows, at least half will come from these two categories.

### **Research and Information Resources**

One of the challenges of operating the INSTITUTE at Reid Hall, the home of the Global Center|Europe, is that there will not be a great library on-site to inform and enrich advanced scholarship and creativity. The Institute will have its own librarian and it is expected that this person will be both bilingual in French and English and will also be familiar with collections of the principal libraries and archives within the EU.

In addition, Ann Thornton, Vice Provost and Columbia University Librarian, has agreed that the University's libraries will constitute the de facto library of the INSTITUTE. This will make the full range of electronic data bases to which the University subscribes available to INSTITUTE fellows. Books and periodicals will be loaned to fellows from the Columbia campus-based libraries. Unique materials—such as photographs, manuscripts, and rare books—can be scanned at Columbia and delivered electronically to readers at the INSTITUTE.

Establishing a privileged relationship between the Institute and the Bibliothèque nationale de France (BnF) is also recommended in order to provide something as close to bespoke service as possible for INSTITUTE fellows. Close ties already exist between the Global Center | Paris and the BnF, notably the jointly sponsored annual global writers festival (Columbia—BnF Festival des Écrivains du Monde) , an initiative of the Global Center. In addition, the Director of the Global Center is a member of the senior policy committee of the BnF. We intend further to develop contacts with leading research facilities in Paris such as the ENS and the College de France, with the librarian of Sciences Po., which has an extensive English-language library in the humanistic social sciences, and with the network of institutes of advanced study in France. Columbia's long-standing Alliance Program, linking the University to Paris-I, Sciences Po., and the Ecole Polytechnique will be helpful in this regard.

## **Leadership**

The INSTITUTE's founding Director will be substantially engaged in, and often leading, every aspect of planning for the INSTITUTE, ranging from the abstract elements – the INSTITUTE's research agenda – to the more concrete, such as determining the square footage of the fellows' offices. The Director will, above all, focus on forming an intellectual community that nurtures ongoing research links and creates new ones with partners across Europe and beyond, links that will enable former INSTITUTE fellows to disseminate ideas through teaching, publishing and mentoring.

Operationalizing these linkages requires engagement with key figures at Columbia including the EVP for Arts and Sciences, the deans of Humanities, Social Sciences, the School of the Arts; and the Committee on Global Thought, among others. Conversations with all these figures are at an advanced stage and plans have already been made to integrate the INSTITUTE's fellowship in the research and teaching activities of Arts and Sciences in particular, and to offer fellows teaching possibilities, including one-off seminars and possibly mini-courses on the new MA in Global Thought.

Together with the chair of the committee on the global core, we will hold, both at the INSTITUTE and on the Morningside campus, seminars at which fellows and former fellows discuss the pedagogic implications of their work and experience at the INSTITUTE: the chair of the committee on the global core will partner the planning for this, and will be an ex officio member of the INSTITUTE Executive Committee. We also plan to create a dedicated platform at the Heyman Center for the Humanities in conjunction with the Society of Fellows that will enable three non-Columbia University post-doctoral fellows to continue their relationship with the University once their residence in Paris has ended by spending time as Global Fellows at the Morningside Heights campus, fully integrated into the teaching and research life of the university.

Fellows returning to Columbia's main campus will be encouraged to continue their research and pedagogic collaborations and to help publicize new approaches to intellectual innovation. In this way, international contacts made at the INSTITUTE with non-Columbia colleagues may funnel global thinkers to Columbia's main campus, offering new courses to students and providing examples of alternative pedagogic traditions.



Appointed by and reporting to the University President with a secondary reporting relationship to the Director of the Global Centers | Europe, the INSTITUTE Director will serve for three years (renewable for successive three years terms) and be responsible for creating a harmonious and productive community of scholars and creative individuals. He/she will also be charged with making the INSTITUTE a vibrant hub of timely, relevant and engaging exchanges not only in Europe, but globally as well. In addition, the Director will be engaged with others at Columbia in securing external and internal support for the INSTITUTE'S activities.

An Executive Committee will be created to assist and advise the Director on the INSTITUTE'S operations and an annual report prepared by the Director will report on the INSTITUTE'S activities to the President, Provost, Executive Committee and Global Centers | Europe donors. Among those who have indicated their willingness to be asked to serve on the Executive Committee are the following: Carol Becker [Dean, School of the Arts]; Vishakha Desai [Presidential Adviser on Global Affairs]; Geraldine Downey [Psychology]; Stuart Firestein [Biology]; Pierre Force [French]; Carol Gluck [History]; Ira Katznelson [Politics; currently President, Social Science Research Council]; Sharon Marcus [Dean of Humanities, English]; Reinhold Martin [Architecture]; Nara Milanich [Anthropology]; Timothy Mitchell [MESAAS]; Alondra Nelson [Dean for Social Sciences, Sociology]; Katharina Pistor [Law School].

### **Outcomes and Benefits of the INSTITUTE FOR IDEAS AND IMAGINATION**

The immediate outcomes of the INSTITUTE include,

- Fostering the work of a global cohort of brilliant young scholars, writers and artists that has transformative creative and intellectual potential both for their home countries and for the University;
- Better understanding of the way colleges and universities organize knowledge and design core curricula to reflect this;
- Increased frequency and occasion for collaboration between Columbia faculty and scholars in various parts of the world, including those tied to the cities where there are Global Centers and those, too, that are underrepresented in traditional academic pursuits and thought traditions.

- Research findings and creative output that promises to transform existing approaches to knowledge formation;
- Creating a space for conceptual reflection and conversation among thinkers and creative professionals of diverse intellectual and artistic traditions and approaches, thus contributing to the dismantling of the parochialism of American academia.
- Reinvigoration and revitalization of outmoded epistemological and disciplinary assumptions; and
- Founding of a community of scholars and creative individuals enriched by Columbia University's global reach and its physical presence outside the U.S. that remains explicitly connected to New York City and to present and future intellectual and pedagogical needs.

The early benefits gained by the INSTITUTE are foremost knowledge creation and advancement in the humanities, humanistic social sciences, conceptual dimensions of scientific enquiry and the arts. Gathering selected fellows for a ten-month period promotes dynamic exchange of the varied fields at the very highest level, resulting in products that will be shared broadly through public forums and scholarly publications. On the farther horizon, benefits should include shifting the prevailing departmental culture to one that has deeper appreciation of interdisciplinarity, of the contingency of our scholarly practices and of the need for the academy to engage with the wider world in creating new approaches to knowledge.

Through its collaborations with international scholars and the full cohort of global centers, the INSTITUTE will add strength to the Columbia Global Centers networks. It will also contribute, both directly and indirectly, to the core pedagogic functions of the University, in particular the Global Core Curriculum. Attentiveness to the potential benefits to be drawn by American academia from openness to very different approaches to knowledge globally will be matched, reciprocally, by the desire to utilize the enormous resource base and expertise of a great American university in enriching the intellectual life of potential partners in less advantaged institutions around the world. The INSTITUTE'S mission will not be satisfied unless it builds on the ties residency creates and utilizes its growing network of fellows to enrich intellectual life outside Columbia as well as inside it. This proposal thus envisages the INSTITUTE as the epicenter of a genuinely global initiative.

## APPENDIX: COLUMBIA FACULTY AND THE INSTITUTE

Columbia University has an unrivalled array of faculty with interests and intellectual connections that will facilitate the work of the proposed new INSTITUTE. The original idea for the INSTITUTE emerged from the work of the faculty steering committee of the Global Center/ Europe which discussed and refined the proposal over two years starting in the spring of 2013. Among the participants who played a key role in formulating the initial idea and in the discussions that followed are: Akeel Bilgrami [Philosophy], Carol Gluck [History], Gayatri Spivak [English and ICLS]; Carol Becker [Dean, School of the Arts]; and Katharina Pistor [Law].

Further faculty consultation took place during two evening deliberations hosted by President Bollinger. Alongside university administrative leaders such as the Provost, the Vice President for Arts and Sciences and the Vice President for Global Centers and Global Development, the discussion – and subsequent planning – were shaped by, among others: Ira Katznelson [Politics]; Alondra Nelson [Dean of Social Sciences, and Sociology]; Sharon Marcus [Dean of Humanities, and English]; Sarah Cleveland (Law School); Stuart Firestein (Biology); Vishakha Desai (President’s Office); Timothy Mitchell (MESAAS); Ken Prewitt (SIPA); Perry Mehrling (Barnard: Economics); and Reinhold Martin (Architecture). The office of the Vice President for Arts and Sciences, and in particular, the two Deans for Humanities and Social Sciences, have provided valuable input over many months. Three meetings, involving more than fifty faculty from across a range of disciplines and departments, have been convened for the fall of 2015 in order to solicit advice and suggestions on the most effective way to recruit fellows globally and more generally on the functioning of the new INSTITUTE. Further discussions and meetings will take place in spring 2016. Once the INSTITUTE starts operating, currently estimated, subject to the necessary approvals, to be no earlier than the fall of 2017, faculty will be involved at every level, from suggesting how to identify prospective fellows to reading applications and of course participating themselves in the life of the INSTITUTE.