

Board Resolution 2015-2

**VISION STATEMENT FOR THE NELSON A. ROCKEFELLER INSTITUTE OF GOVERNMENT,
STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK**

Submitted to the Rockefeller Institute Board of Overseers

March 18, 2015

The mission of the Nelson A. Rockefeller Institute of Government of SUNY (the Institute) is to improve the capacities of communities, state and local governments, and the federal system to work toward genuine solutions to the nation's problems. Through rigorous, objective, and accessible analysis and outreach, the Institute will give citizens and governments facts and tools relevant to public decisions. It will also research and promote changes aimed at improving how public institutions operate, such as how they work across institutional divisions to solve common problems, use and generate evidence, and execute challenging responsibilities.

In pursuit of these goals, the Institute draws on the strengths of the State University of New York as well as those of other colleges and universities across New York State and the nation. The Institute embodies the belief that universities and colleges can improve governance through research, expert advice, training for public service, and public dissemination and engagement. This premise echoes and extends SUNY's mission statement, which calls for the university to share its expertise with "the business, agricultural, *governmental*, labor, and nonprofit sectors of the state through a program of public service [*italics added*]." The Institute's grounding in universities also undergirds *how* it performs its mission—to *educate* based on open inquiry and scientific principles, *not advocate* particular interests or ideological views.

As the only policy research institute in the United States affiliated with a comprehensive university *system*, the Institute views the "university" in plural terms. The large number and dispersion of universities and colleges within SUNY and across the nation mean that higher education institutions can connect with many localities for outreach and engagement. Yet these campuses and the people within them are linked to one another through shared disciplines, skills, values, and understandings of what constitutes knowledge and evidence. These commonalities make intellectual networks around public issues practicable, while the diversity and geographic spread of institutions permit each campus to forge close and mutually beneficial relationships with particular governments and communities.

The Institute's mission is broad and can be adapted to future, yet-unknown public problems. In the next decade, however, the Institute expects to address the following challenges, among others:

- 1) Generating and using knowledge for public actions, including the evaluation of their impacts.
- 2) Improving fiscal capacity and management in state and local governments.
- 3) Building public capacity to implement complex programs and policies.
- 4) Engaging young people and communities in state and local governance.
- 5) Finding ways to reduce the inequities of place in U.S. federalism.

These are big tasks. Throughout its history, the Institute has dealt with its large mission by working with others. It has relied on SUNY faculty and students; it has worked with field network research teams across the country; and it has collaborated with governments, research organizations, associations, and universities and colleges. The Rockefeller Institute needs partners to address the challenges of governance in a complex federal system. Yet it embraces the responsibility to create and nurture those partnerships.