



IMAGINING AMERICA
artists + scholars in public life

2024-2025 Annual Report

June 30, 2025

We are pleased to share the Imagining America Annual Report for the 2024-2025 membership year. It has been a joy to build new and meaningful relationships with so many people, organizations, and places across the national network and we hope that you enjoy reading on for all that we have learned and accomplished in the past year. We look forward to engaging with one another in the year ahead, especially at the [2025 IA National Gathering](#) in Las Cruces New Mexico, October 3-5.

CONNECTING AND ENGAGING IN 2024-2025

The Imagining America (IA) national consortium continued to grow and build this year as we celebrated five new member institutions. IA staff welcomed a new Communications Director, Anuj Vaidya, to the team and thanked Troy Nichols for his positive contributions as Associate Director of Membership. We wish him well in future endeavors. Over the past year, the IA community of artists, scholars, students, and cultural organizers committed to the IA mission, vision, and values joined together in a diverse array of programs, events, and learning opportunities.

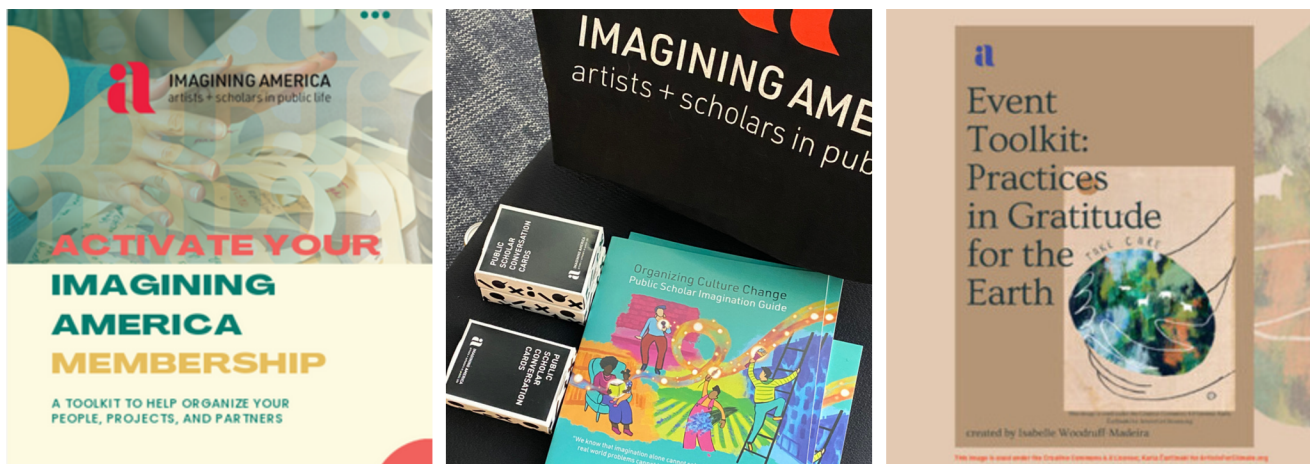


Images from IA Happening: Textures of Ecology, which inspired the 2024-2025 IA Mail Art Project

2024-2025 was an active year for IA online and in-person local programming. Throughout the year, IA offered over 20 events engaging nearly 1,000 students, faculty, staff, and cultural leaders in free learning opportunities. Co-organized with IA's National Advisory Board, two events in fall addressed "Community Building and Cultural Memory: The Role of Art as Resistance in the Case of a Liberated Palestine" and "Cultivating Awareness and Resisting Repression: A Conversation on the Intersectional Impact of Fascism." The IA Book Club convened members of the IA community to discuss *Survival Is a Promise: The Eternal Life of Audre Lorde* by Alexis Pauline Gumbs.

Two online events were created specifically for member engagement: a fall Meet IA session and winter Teaching and Learning Circle sharing out a new member toolkit to [Activate Your IA Membership](#).

A three-part virtual Communities of Care series emerged to address urgent concerns for connection and mutual support in the context of harms experienced in the current political climate. Coordinated with IA National Advisory Board members, the first event, facilitated by board member Darby Ray (Bates College), asked participants to reflect on where they are feeling overwhelmed and where they are finding hope; the second event facilitated by board member (artist and educator) Kayhan Irani led participants through a reflective exercise for creative pause; and the final event facilitated by Erica Kohl-Arenas (IA Faculty Director) led participants through a story circle activity on where participants are or are not finding care in these times.



Resources and toolkits created by Imagining America:

- 1) Activate Your IA Membership Toolkit, 2) IA Public Scholar Cards and Imagination Guide, and 3) Event Toolkit: Practices in Gratitude for the Earth*

IA focused on sharing out the creative tools developed from findings from IA's national action research project to better understand how to shift institutional culture in higher education to more fully support public and activist scholarship. Three workshops, facilitated by IA staff Stephanie Maroney and Anuj Vaidya and board members at member campuses UC Santa Cruz, Emerson College, and University of Richmond featured a deep dive with the [Public Scholar Card Deck and Public Scholar Imagination Guide](#). These tools were developed from the IA Mellon funded Leading and Learning Initiative which also inspired an article by IA Faculty Director Erica Kohl-Arenas featured in the inaugural issue of the journal [Public Humanities](#).

In Davis, CA, IA hosted three in-person happenings to gather community and connect creatively. “[Textures of Ecology](#)” convened people in the UC Davis Arboretum and Public Garden to explore sensory embodiment in nature, and launched the idea for the 2024-2025 [IA Mail Art Project](#) theme. IA worked with local collaborator International House Davis to gather people for a [Story Circle event on community connection](#) in Yolo County. The final in-person event for the academic year focused on “[Practices in Gratitude for the Earth](#)” and was organized by IA intern and American Studies student Isabelle Woodruff-Madeira. IA collaborated with local organization the [YoloSol Collective](#) on two events featuring Indigenous knowledge and art making practices in the Yolo Bioregion.



The IA Hubbub launched in 2025. This podcast series on art, ecology, and public scholarship spotlights projects from across the IA network that bring together faculty, students, and knowledge keepers from the community for collaborative learning.

At the creative direction of Communications Director Anuj Vaidya, IA is excited to have launched a new media work, the [IA Hubbub](#) podcast on art, ecology, and public scholarship across the IA Network. The first two episodes begin by taking a look at projects happening at UC Davis, and centering faculty collaborations with Wintun/Maidu cultural practitioner and ecologist Diana Almendariz around cultural fire, wetland restoration, and visual art. The final episode of the season shines a light on graduate student projects at IA Member institutions Michigan State University and University of Southern California.

Imagining America is pleased to support [six new Collaboratories](#) this year. These compelling projects responded to the first invitation for IA Collaboratories in over a decade, welcoming emergent partnerships and new communities of practice to form in areas of shared interest among IA members and partners in the broader IA network. From a virtual speaker series on the undercommons and a puppet parade performance to communities of practice on radical pedagogy, regional organizing, speculative futures, and student refuge, the projects will be carried out across 10 IA member campuses and collaborate with at least 7 other neighboring campuses and communities.

IA MEMBERS

IA is especially proud to grow our membership in 2024-2025. Please join us in celebrating these new members to the IA consortium:

- James Madison University
- Montclair State University
- New Mexico State University
- University of California, Dominguez Hills
- University of New Mexico

IA member stories and successes were uplifted through [member spotlights](#) in our monthly newsletter and social media. Faculty, staff, students, and community and cultural leaders from across our network stayed up to date on the latest news and offerings from IA by [subscribing to our mailing list](#). Never hesitate to send us names of new students and colleagues who would benefit from receiving news from IA. If your institution is not yet a member of Imagining America, now is a great time to join! Just reach out to membership@imaginingamerica.org to explore the opportunities and to learn more about how to join the national consortium.



IA National Advisory Board Members [left to right] Darby Ray, Sylvia Spears, David King, Michaela Pride, Sophia Acord, Kayhan Irani, Mari Castañeda, Milmon Harrison, and Paul Schadewald with Faculty Director Erica Kohl-Arenas at the Manetti Shrem Museum of Art for the 2024 fall board meeting in Davis, CA.

IA LEADERSHIP

This year we welcomed new members to our National Advisory Board (NAB) and wished fond farewells to others. IA is excited to welcome Romy Hübler (Towson University) and Judy Pryor-Ramirez (New York University) to the NAB next year.

IA recognizes and appreciates the following creative and thoughtful leaders for their service to the IA National Advisory Board, and who will return to their other important work in the world: Sophia Acord (ASK Associates), Frederick "Wood" Delahoussaye (Ashé Cultural Arts Center), Liya Escalera (Harvard University), Fred Knight (Morehouse College), and Carol Zou (Independent Artist, Teacher, Strategist).

We thank our current board members for their ongoing and deep engagement with IA and look forward to all we will accomplish in 2025-2026:

Chair Paul Schadewald (Bringing Theory to Practice)

Vice-Chair Milmon Harrison (University of California, Davis)

NAB Members: Mari Castañeda (University of Massachusetts, Amherst), Rebecca Castillo (Los Angeles Times), Lizzy Cooper Davis (Emerson College), Denise Frazier (Prospect New Orleans), Sylvia Gale (University of Richmond), Romy Hübler (Towson University), Kayhan Irani (Artivista Productions), Carlos Jackson (University of Michigan), David King (Apollo Theatre), Victor Ultra Omni (Emory University - PAGE Co-Director), Michael Pride (University of New Mexico), Judy Pryor-Ramirez (New York University), Darby Ray (Bates College), Sylvia Spears (College Unbound), Gabrielle Wen (University of Arizona - PAGE Co-Director), and Winoka Yepa (Native Americans in Philanthropy).



Images from the IA Engaged Arts Summit in Davis, CA

IA STUDENT FELLOWS

IA supported the professional development of emerging publicly engaged scholars and practitioners by welcoming new cohorts of eight undergraduate student [Joy of Giving Something Fellows](#) and eight graduate student [Publicly Active Graduate Education Fellows](#) to the IA network. IA also continued to offer an internship program through our host campus, the University of California, Davis, and mentored Isabelle Madeira-Woodruff, an undergraduate student from the American Studies Department, on a creative event this year.

The PAGE Program was led by four exceptional Co-directors in 2024-2025:

- Chelsea N. Bouldin, Syracuse University
- monét cooper, University of Michigan
- Angela Rose David, University of California, Los Angeles
- Ural Grant, Michigan State University

The first event of its kind organized for IA fellows while at UC Davis, the [Engaged Arts Summit](#) brought together 8 undergraduate IA/Joy of Giving Something Fellows and 12 Publicly Active Graduate Education (PAGE) Fellows at the IA headquarters in Davis, CA. From October 17-19, 20 scholars from 17 IA member campuses engaged in three days of camaraderie, connection, and creativity. The agenda included creative activities, workshops with the IA pedagogical tools, group outings to a reception in downtown Davis and screen-printing workshop at Taller Arte de Nuevo Amanacer. PAGE Fellows worked closely with IA Communications Director Anuj Vaidya to create their [Blog Salon posts](#), and IA/JGS Fellows enjoyed a special trip to the Manetti Shrem Museum led by UC Davis Design student Jadzia Pho, who shared participatory reflection activities she co-created as part of an internship projec



Undergraduate IA/JGS Fellows at the 2024 IA Engaged Arts Summit in Davis, CA

JGS FELLOWS

- Jordan Cook, Towson University
- Keezia Lynne Dotimas, Vanderbilt University
- Aidan Hatch, University of California, Davis
- Kaitlyn Murray, Xavier University of Louisiana
- Jadzia Pho, University of California Davis
- Sadir Rahman, University of Southern California
- Sakina Saidi, Bates College
- Martina Scarpa, Providence College

PAGE FELLOWS

- Ololade Faniyi, Emory University
- Brian Rivera Hernandez, University of California Santa Cruz
- Catheryne Geneviève Hicks, University of Washington, Bothell
- Liliana Marcias, University of Illinois Chicago
- Victor Omni, Emory University
- Huy Phan, University of California, Santa Barbara
- Gabby Wen, University of Arizona
- Haoqing Yu, Georgetown University

MEMBER BENEFITS IN 2025-2026

We look forward to continued partnership with our members in the year ahead and at the 2025 IA National Gathering in Las Cruces, NM from October 3-5. Organized with New Mexico State University and marking the 25th anniversary of Imagining America, [*Providing Passage: Practicing the Worlds We Want*](#) celebrates and conjures passages: of time, texts, pathways, and portals that IA has created for public and engaged scholars in the past, present, and imaginable future; and of the life-sustaining ecological, physical, intellectual, and spiritual passages that artists, organizers, and scholars provide as a way forward in the turbulent currents of our time.



Benefits of IA membership in 2025-2026 include:

IA National Gathering. This three-day immersive experience engages public scholars, artists, designers, students, cultural organizers, and members of the general public in collaborative learning, making, dreaming, dialogue, and problem-solving. Located in a different member institution region each year, the [IA National Gathering](#) provides a space for participants to connect with one another and to experience and strategize on how the arts, humanities, design, and cultural organizing can be leveraged towards transformative learning and action. Members receive one free conference registration and discounted registration fees for students, faculty, and staff.

Leadership Forum. Institutional leaders of IA member campuses are invited to participate in the annual IA Leadership Forum, which takes place at the annual National Gathering. The Forum provides institutional leaders a space to engage in critical analysis of leadership challenges and opportunities to devise collective strategies to better support public and creative scholarship. For the first time, the 2025 Leadership Forum will be open to all Gathering participants.

Publicly Active Graduate Education (PAGE) Fellowship. The [PAGE Fellowship](#) is a national, interdisciplinary community of publicly-engaged graduate students engaged in public humanities, arts, and design scholarship and creative practice. PAGE enhances the practice and pedagogy of public scholarship and provides peer support, career networking, and opportunities for collaborative knowledge production. Graduate students from member campuses are eligible to apply for the PAGE Fellowship on an annual basis.

Joy of Giving Something (JGS) Fellowship. The [IA/JGS Fellowship](#) aims to elevate photography and digital media as pathways for undergraduate students to pursue their careers and to make a difference in their communities. JGS fellows commit to a year-long learning exchange that includes tuition support, financial support for a community project, and opportunities for professional development. Undergraduate students from member campuses are eligible to apply for the JGS Fellowship on an annual basis.

Research Initiatives and Collaboratories. IA's action research portfolio includes Equitable Food Futures with Sipp Culture to activate agri (cultural) imaginations towards equitable, thriving food futures, and the Leading and Learning Initiative (LLI), which documents challenges and successful practices to shift campus culture in support of public and activist scholarship. Members are invited to participate in IA's research collaboratories, which have long been part of IA's work to connect members across the IA consortium in the production of public knowledge and collective imagination through collaborative research and experimentation. [Six current projects](#) join the ongoing work of Assessing the Practices of Public Scholarship (APPS) who create values-based evaluation frameworks for assessing the impact, process, and relationships of public scholarship and campus-community engagement projects, and the Collective of Publicly Engaged Designers (CoPED) who convene leading design thinkers and doers to reflect upon and assert the importance of design in developing innovative strategies for public engagement.

Webinars and Virtual Convenings. IA regularly organizes virtual convenings to provide accessible, year-round networking and learning opportunities. The Teaching and Learning Circle (TLC) webinar series facilitates conversations, learning, and resource sharing on critical topics within the IA consortium. IA Study Groups provide spaces for peer study and connection. Meet IA sessions help orient prospective, new, or current members to the IA network, and other information sessions provide insight into specific IA programs and initiatives. Webinars are free for members, and we welcome proposals for future topics.

Mail Art Project. The Mail Art Project is an annual opportunity for IA members to engage in important topics and issues through shared creative art making and reflection. Themes are drawn from IA's National Gatherings and include rituals of repair and renewal, and radical reckoning for collective change. This is a free, members-only program.

Member and Regional Organizing. Supported by IA staff and the IA National Advisory Board, member focused and regional events offer scholars, students, artists, designers, and community organizers opportunities to explore the theory and practice of public scholarship and cultural organizing, discuss pressing issues impacting member campuses and regions, and foster a peer support network. Members have access to resources to support organizing on their own campus, including the [Activate Your IA Membership toolkit](#), as well as multi-campus IA networks in their regions.

National Spotlight. IA promotes public scholarship, cultural organizing, and campus change by lifting up the stories of our members through a number of platforms, including: the [IAStoryShare](#) and [IA Hubbub](#) podcasts and featured member spotlights in our monthly newsletters and social media. Members are invited to submit news, job postings, and other stories at any time.

Peer Learning Tools. The Public Scholar Conversation Cards and the Public Scholar Imagination Guide are [pedagogical tools](#) inspired by the findings from IA action research projects. The card deck is designed to spark conversation and deepen understanding about the contributions and struggles of public, engaged, and activist artists, designers, and scholars. The Imagination Guide is an interactive workbook that provides reflection, action, and imagination tools for anyone trying to make the university a more hospitable, caring, and creative place to nurture public, engaged, and activist scholarship, art, and design. IA also offers tools for facilitating Story Circles and on specific topics following IA events.

Publications. [PUBLIC](#): A Journal of Imagining America is an innovative peer-reviewed, multimedia e-journal that features art, scholarship, and dialogue at the intersections of the humanities, arts, and design in public life. The digital archive is available to view; we are not currently accepting submissions. The relaunched [Foreseeable Futures](#) position paper series shares the work of culture keepers and thinkers, in dialogue with respondents from the IA network.

IA staff thanks you for a year of important and meaningful engagement and we look forward to the year ahead!

- Erica Kohl-Arenas, Faculty Director
- Stephanie Maroney, Managing Director
- Erin Syoen, Operations & Events Manager
- Anuj Vaidya, Communications Director
- Matt Foster, Financial Analyst



Stay connected with IA throughout the year @imaginingamerica



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