



Strategic Directions, 2024 - 2027

I. **Imagining America: Mission, Vision, Values**

The Imagining America consortium (IA) brings together scholars, artists, designers, students, and cultural organizers to imagine, study, and enact a more just and liberatory 'America' and world. Working across institutional, disciplinary, and community divides, IA strengthens and promotes public scholarship, cultural organizing, and campus change that inspires collective imagination, knowledge making, and civic action on pressing public issues.

Our refreshed mission, vision, and values emerged from a deep strategic planning process during IA's ten-year term at the University of California, Davis. This process involved interviews with over 75 stakeholders, dialogues amongst leaders from IA's past, present, and future, assessment of our research and programmatic portfolio, and an analysis of the advanced field of higher education serving associations that has grown since IA's founding in 1999.

Today, IA's most valuable role in this diversified field is what we call the work of imagining. IA's unique capacity to bring people together across common divides within academic institutions and alongside community-based culture keepers shepherds the IA network towards our north star vision of a world of expansive social imagination where people nurture healthy, vibrant, caring, and joyful communities.

We strive towards this long-haul vision by holding ourselves accountable to [seven guiding values](#). First, we believe that it is important to struggle with the idea of 'America,' which represents both transformational freedom movements and legacies of dispossession and oppression. We also believe that creative culture is an important site of liberation and that every human has the capacity to learn and lead.

Together, we believe:

1. It is important to struggle with the idea of 'America'.
2. Creative culture is an important site of liberation.
3. Organized ideas matter in the project of personal, institutional, and societal transformation.
4. Nothing is completely new. We must build upon the wisdom of elders as we also engage the next generation.
5. Our work must be radically inclusive.
6. How we learn and work with one another matters.
7. Living up to our values requires institutional and societal change.

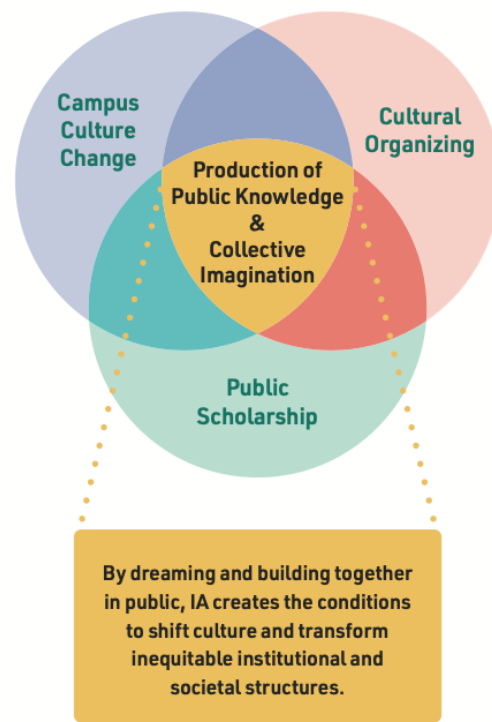
II. Who We Are

Imagining America is a national membership consortium, currently hosted at the University of California, Davis. IA is led by a [staff team](#) at UC Davis and a [National Advisory Board](#). We are composed of 70 [institutional members](#) and longstanding cultural partners. We are also a growing distributed network of [engaged graduate scholars](#) and [undergraduate media makers](#).

III. What We Do

“We know that imagination alone cannot solve real world problems, but real world problems cannot be solved without it.” Sekou Sundiata

At the critical intersections of **public scholarship**, **cultural organizing**, and **institutional change** in higher education, IA brings people together to share knowledge and creative practice. We lead and support work within and across these three spheres, and our cornerstone projects demonstrate the power at their intersections – the production of public knowledge and collective imagination.



IA organizes the national consortium through three over-lapping modalities: connecting and convening, organizing research and peer learning, and promoting and advocating for IA members and allies.

Connect and Convene

IA creates virtual and physical spaces to deepen relationships, inspire collaboration, experiment with old and new ideas and practices, rehearse being together in other ways, and develop critical yet hopeful approaches to addressing issues of collective concern.

- IA National Gathering
- Webinars and Virtual Programming
 - Meet IA Sessions
 - Member Study Groups and Workshops
 - Teaching and Learning Circles
- IA Happenings
- Mail Art Project

Research and Learning

IA conducts and coordinates collaborative research on issues of importance to public scholars and artists, including action research to inspire institutional change in higher education. We translate research into resources that support peer learning, professional development, and collective organizing.

- Research Reports
- Public Scholarship Tools and Resources
- Teaching and Learning Circles
- *Foreseeable Futures* Publications
- IA Study Groups
- IA Collaborative Research Initiatives: Collective of Publicly Engaged Designers (CoPED), Assessing the Practices of Public Scholarship (APPS)

Promote and Advocate

IA fortifies the intellectual and creative work of individuals and collectives who bring their hearts and minds to the critical work of imagination. We support our diverse members and partners inside and outside of academic institutions who harness the resources of higher education towards a more just and equitable world.

- Randy Martin Spirit Award
- Julie Ellison Vision Award
- Publicly Active Graduate Education (PAGE) Fellows Program
- IA / Joy of Giving Something Foundation (JGS) Undergraduate Fellows Program
- IA Member Stories
- IA Newsletter, Blog Salon, and Social Media
- Tailored Member Support from Staff, National Advisory Board, and Peer Institutions

It is our hope that a new host campus will continue to build upon the Mission, Vision, Values, and strategic modes of organizing described in this document, while adding their own mission-aligned resources, hopes, and interests.

IV. Strategic Directions, 2024-2027

The IA-UC Davis strategic planning process produced the refreshed mission, vision, values, spheres of impact, and clarified the modes of organizing shared above. To deliver on these commitments IA organized new [research initiatives on campus change](#) to better support public scholarship and on [creative cultural organizing](#). We created online learning spaces and dialogue tools to engage members, radically diversified and expanded participation at the National Gathering and on the National Advisory Board (NAB), rebranded the IA logo and website, and relaunched the *Foreseeable Futures* position paper series to feature culture keepers and thinkers. Existing IA programs and institutional processes were improved, in line with the new guiding values.

Of course, much work remains to be done over the next three years of the IA-UC Davis hosting term. In addition to continuing existing programs and managing the core operating functions of IA, we have identified three critical areas for growth:

1. IA can increase engagement with members.
2. IA can deepen learning with and support of cultural institutions.
3. After 20 years of the Publicly Active Graduate Education program, IA can expand opportunities for the next generation of public scholars and artists.

In the context of staff capacities, resources, and timelines, we have identified the following strategic directions and associated goals to address these challenges and opportunities in advance of the host campus transition in July 2027.

Engaging and Organizing Members

Strengthening the IA member consortium by increasing opportunities for member sharing, connection, and organizing.

- Create deeper IA membership connections through communities of practice.
- Implement creative storytelling strategies that lift and share member stories.
- Make more spaces for students, faculty, staff, and community to share struggles and successes in community engaged scholarship and artmaking.

Uplifting Cultural Organizing Partners

Deepen and formalize IA's support for cultural organizing partners, recognizing and sharing knowledge from beyond higher education.

- Convene a working group of longstanding IA cultural organizations to pilot a cultural institution membership program.
- Create tools and programming opportunities to uplift culture keepers' / cultural workers' wisdom and practices.
- Convene spaces of mutual benefit between community and university collaborators, where community leaders can speak back to the norms of academic knowledge formations.

Supporting Engaged Graduate Scholars

In collaboration with the IA PAGE Co-Directors, organize expanded resources, research, and learning spaces for engaged graduate scholars.

- Create new publications and resources from IA's graduate scholar research.
- Expand the reach of the PAGE fellows' program through virtual workshops, National Gathering programming, resources, and promotion of their work.
- Collaborate with national engaged scholarship programs, institutes, and organizations that support graduate students.
- Recognize PAGE fellows and alumni through the Julie Ellison Vision Award.
- Create a mentorship pipeline for JGS, PAGE, and NAB.