



**UC DAVIS**  
Feminist Research  
Institute  
2025–2029  
Strategic  
Planning Report

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## Executive Summary

With over 2,000 campus and community supporters, FRI is transforming research and research culture to be more inclusive, accurate, and impactful. We do this through the application of intersectional feminist frameworks to research all fields and disciplines. FRI's work reveals historical bias in research and ways to address it. This puts UC Davis at the cutting edge of research that addresses legacies of oppression and furthers goals of equity, and justice. Our activities include research training, community partnerships, and transdisciplinary research projects, all built on inclusive practices. The result is research that moves us towards a restored environment and justice for all regardless of gender, race, ability, socioeconomic background, resources and shared experiences.

FRI is established as a national leader in research justice and has cultivated collaborative relationships with every college at UC Davis and with UC Davis Health. Our work addresses the root causes of inequity, rather than just treating the symptoms. This makes the work applicable to all disciplines, because the history of academia is interwoven with historically oppressive structures. FRI points towards an exciting, yet challenging, path forward that asks researchers to critically examine assumptions, ideals, founding figures, and norms. When this is done, research paths emerge that offer new insights for virtually all fields. Many of these provide a solid foundation for collaborative and convergence research, thus equipping researchers to better address today's grand challenges.

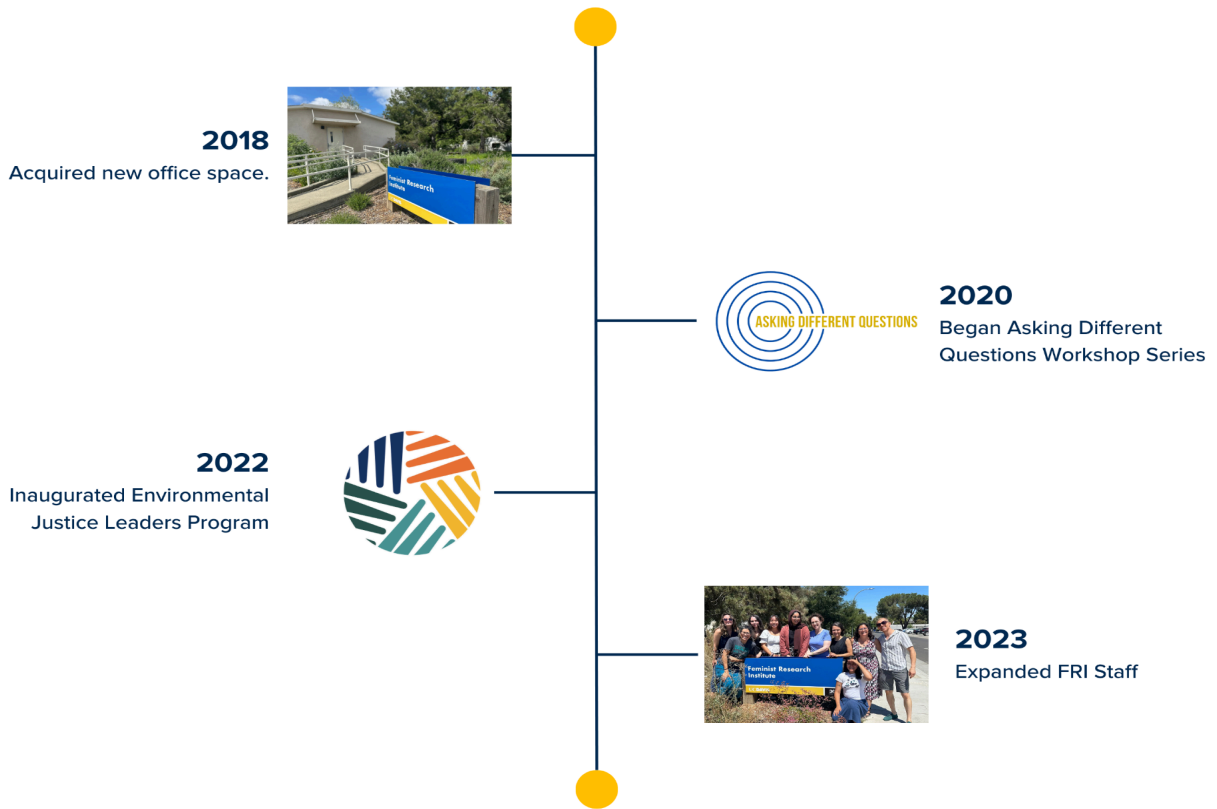
FRI's plan for the next five years builds on established strengths in research training, community-building, and community engagement. The four strategic areas for growth include: (1) expansion of the research training program, Asking Different Questions, (2) development of interdisciplinary collaborations, (3) engaging with roots in humanities and social sciences, and (4) communicating our research to academics, the public, and policy.

The majority of these projects are highly cross-disciplinary, crossing boundaries between STEM, social science, humanities, art, and community knowledge. This expansive, yet targeted, approach offers a wide range of opportunities, all inclusive of equity and justice. These foundational values do invaluable work improving the culture of inclusion at UC Davis in research.

FRI will support this work by executing an aggressive grant submission plan reliant on collaboration with our many partners on campus and beyond. We will diversify revenue streams by subcontracting on other department's grants, seeking out state and federal contracts, growing our donor base, and building relationships with foundations.

## Foundations

The Feminist Research Institute was founded in 2016 to “help UC Davis to become a world leader in feminist scholarship, with noted foci of excellence in feminist science studies, feminist science, and global interdisciplinary feminist research.” Faculty acknowledged that feminist perspectives can make substantial contributions to scientific disciplines by revealing how patriarchy has historically influenced and shaped Western philosophical thought, which in turn has impacted scientific methodologies and interpretations. Since then, FRI has engaged with hundreds of scientists to generate more accurate and just knowledge and research methodologies. Key milestones include the acquisition of a space in 2018, the commencement of the Asking Different Questions program in 2020, the creation of the Environmental Justice Leaders program in 2022, and the expansion of FRI staff in 2023. FRI is located on Orchard Park Drive, within the Sustainable Living and Learning Community on the west side of campus. The Asking Different Questions research training program has educated over 1,000 researchers and been funded by two National Science Foundation grants. The Environmental Justice Leaders program was founded in collaboration with the Institute of Transportation Studies and the Energy Efficiency Institute and brings leaders in environmental justice into the UC Davis research community for a year. The hiring of a Research Program & Policy Manager expanded FRI’s capacity to pursue external funding and publish research.



## Mission

To cultivate research that moves us towards justice for all people and a restorative environment.

## Vision

To live in a liberated world where all people can engage in the delight of curiosity, the creation of community, and the joy of discovery in research. Feminist research has tools to address histories of oppression and challenge harmful hierarchies of knowledge that continue to infuse research. When we redress these legacies, we can uphold the wisdom of marginalized voices and collectively create more impactful and accurate results in all disciplines. We move toward this vision with integrity, standing in our expertise, while also holding humility for what we do not know.

## Values

FRI defines feminist research as:

- **Intersectional:** encompassing sex and gender as they relate to other categories of difference such as race, class, ability, sexuality, and religion.

- **Inclusive:** recognizing expertise across different spaces and disciplinary boundaries.
- **Justice-oriented:** challenging structures of inequality in everyday interactions as well as social institutions, including academia itself.
- **Transformative:** enacting positive change to end oppression and create a more just world.

## Impact

### Transforming research to be more impactful, accurate, and equitable

FRI's greatest impact is in the research we do and the conversations we spark that transform research to be more relevant and equitable. In the past five years, we have accomplished our previous strategic plan goals of creating a feminist training program for STEM researchers, fostering collaborative research, and creating an intellectual community through rotating themes, solidifying our core infrastructure, and broadening out base of support.

### Making UC Davis a university concerned with equity and justice

FRI contributes to UC Davis's public image of a socially-conscious university making a positive impact. Issues that feminism cares about, such as social justice and equity, are values shared by many California residents and an even greater percentage of California youth. We push the university to move the needle on social issues by realizing new paradigms that address the roots of injustice. Undergraduates are particularly committed to our work, and are included in our enterprise as researchers, assistants, and volunteers. Participation with FRI has helped many, particularly diverse students, to see a place for themselves in majors where they are under-represented. Many of these majors, such as STEM majors, result in higher earnings post-graduation, which leads to a more successful and diverse alumni base.

### Improving retention

Bringing a feminist lens to research is proven to improve campus and workplace culture around diversity, equity, and inclusion. In the past decades, feminist scholars have been at the forefront of researching what practices lead to greater inclusion. We apply these tools to the research setting which results in greater sense of belonging among those historically under-represented across undergraduate and graduate students, staff, and faculty at UC Davis. Thus, our work contributes to the recruitment and retention of womxn, Black, Indigenous, and other people of color, a goal of the campus and the newly created Office of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion. This can translate into significant savings as faculty are retained post-tenure, when they are poised to give service back to the university, and in the form of cost savings for avoiding new searches.

## 2025-2029 Goals



### Goal 1: Expand Asking Different Questions (ADQ) Educational Trainings

We will expand ADQ to build off of the success of the current ADQ series and reach into all fields research and greater engagement. Asking Different Questions Training Series provides STEM scholars with a commitment to justice with the intellectual tools to implement social justice-centered values. The Asking Different Questions Research Training Series applies feminist science studies and ethnic studies research to a STEM context, and is designed for experts, scholars, and researchers who want to use their talents to create a more just and sustainable world.

Examples of topics covered include recognizing how histories of oppression continue to influence current scientific practices and how to address this, identifying implicit values in research, identifying stereotypes embedded in the language and metaphors of science,

conducting meaningful community-engaged research and working with Tribal nations, and addressing limitations in existing methods.

The training has been well-attended by a variety of fields, with 25% in agricultural or environmental science, 20% in social sciences, 13% in biological sciences, 8% in engineering, 8% in physical sciences and 20% doing other fields. 55% of attendees identify as underrepresented in their field. Reviews of the training are high, with 89% of attendees saying they would recommend the training to colleagues. Feedback also shows that the program gives participants a greater sense of connection and confidence. Short-term evaluation shows that the training improves participants' sense of belonging and identity as a scientist, two leading indicators that contribute to the retention of diverse individuals in STEM. This is particularly true of those historically under-represented in academia.

Five recommendations for expansion of ADQ include:

1. Graduate students: continue offering seminars; expand to do more field-specific training
2. Faculty: implement train-the-trainer model
3. Community: Use workshops as a foundation for co-learning to improve university-community research collaborations
4. Undergraduate: customize for undergraduates less familiar with scientific process, norms, and culture.
5. K-12 students: work with K-12 educators and curriculum design experts. Consider interventions in newly-created ethnic studies California curriculum and justice-oriented teacher groups

## **Goal 2: Develop Collaborative, Interdisciplinary Research**

Since its founding, research collaborations have been a cornerstone of FRI's mission and operations. We are committed to continue and start new dialogues meant to catalyze innovative, impactful, and radically interdisciplinary projects through the application of feminist research.

We aim to continue to build close, interdisciplinary partnerships with researchers both within UC Davis and beyond, particularly with other UC campuses. These collaborations span across professors and researchers, but also include graduate and undergraduate student researchers, shaping the way young scholars navigate their fields and fostering more just and inclusive methodologies and approaches to our socio-environmental issues.

We will build on our strengths and partnerships to implement models of epistemic justice in the following areas:

- a. Climate and Environmental Justice
- b. Mobility Justice



- c. Transgender Health Equity
- d. STEMM Education
- e. Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Data Sciences
- f. Gender Inequity
- g. Participatory and Open Science

### **Goal 3: Engaging with Our Roots**

While an important purpose of FRI has been to engage with STEM fields, we are reminded that the origins and intellectual roots of feminist theory are located within the arts, humanities and social sciences. Thus, we aim to honor the thinkers and movements that have given rise to feminist theory, research practices, and ethics and that continuously shape and grow the discussions taking place within the social sciences and humanities.

By engaging arts, humanities, and social sciences, FRI ensures that feminist research practices are in touch with recent and emerging scholarship. Outreach with existing faculty in these departments for collaborative projects could lead to designated spaces for development of creative, visionary, and community-based feminist research and thought.

#### **Areas of engagement**

- a. Leadership: Creation of a multidisciplinary faculty advisory board.
- b. Intellectual: Host communities of researchers, seed new projects
- c. Advocacy: Support efforts to bring attention and resources to feminist research in arts, humanities, and social science

### **Goal 4: Communicate Impact**

We will enhance our existing communication strategy to best promote our efforts in order to garner interest in social-justice based research practices, as well as to secure funding. We aim to demonstrate the impact and importance of feminist research to new and existing audiences. A continued and consistent form of communication from FRI would ensure extensive reach to campus and off-campus communities. We will also grow the reputation of UC Davis as a stronghold for justice-oriented research.

Establish goals are as follows:

1. Grow the reputation of UC Davis and FRI within academia as a leader in knowledge justice through peer-reviewed publications, invited lectures and conference presentations;
2. Influence policy by growing relationships with government officials and creating policy briefs in collaboration with community partners;

3. Maintain accessibility of research to the general public by publishing open access, writing research summaries in plain language, and creating videos summarizing key research interventions; and
4. Grow financial support for feminist research by demonstrating relevancy through transformative stories and relationship development.

## **Sustainability Plan**

FRI has relied primarily on research grants, university funding, and government contracts as financial sources in the past five years. Grants have come from the National Science Foundation and from other sources such as UCOP in partnership with other units on campus. University funding has come from both direct allocations and agreements with other units related to delivery of training services. Government contracts have come from the California Commission on the Status of Women and Girls and the California Air Resource Board Research Division.

In the next five years, FRI will build on this base by accelerating our pursuit of federal grants, cultivating an individual donor base, building relationships to bring in foundation and corporate investments, exploring further opportunities for contracting with state agencies, and maintaining broad university investment.

### **Federal Grants**

Federal grants will remain the mainstay for ongoing financial stability. FRI will pursue grants both as the lead PI and as co-PI on grants coordinated by outside units. Key initiatives where FRI will lead grant submission include expanding and studying the impacts of the Asking Different Questions program and growing collaborative research in areas of where injustice impedes pursuing the frontiers of research. Topical areas include the environment, climate, mobility, data science, gender, and health. The majority of submissions will target the National Science Foundation. Collaborations with other units will also target the NSF, as well as other agencies such as NIH, NEH, USDA, and EPA. Core staff will conduct research for these grant projects, with corresponding salary included in the grant.

### **State Contracts**

State contracts will allow FRI to conduct research of immediate relevance to state agencies, thus serving California residents and further goals of equity across the state. FRI has relationships with leadership at the Strategic Growth Council, California Air Resource Board Environmental Justice and Equity Division, CalEPA Environmental Justice Division, California Commission on the Status of Women and Girls, Caltrans Equity and Tribal Affairs Division, and California Transportation Commission. Contracts will target research related to environmental justice, gender justice, and mobility justice.

### Corporate and Foundation Giving

FRI will build capacity in corporate and foundation relations to create a strategy for finding matches for our mission and values. FRI's public showcase event, the FRI Symposium, hosted every Spring, offers an ideal opening. Corporate sponsorships for this event will be solicited to begin the relationship and grow the scope of our impact. In addition, corporate sponsors are invited to the Environmental Justice Leaders Programs events. Foundation giving will target community-engaged research, particularly the Environmental Justice Leaders program. FRI is working with the Office of Foundation and Corporate Engagement to further capacity in this area.

### Individual Donors

FRI's mission and work speaks to many potential donors interested in using their wealth to affect social change. FRI will develop a strategy to identify and solicit donors in collaboration with the Office of Research development office. FRI aims to host three events a year amenable to a donor audience. These include an annual Open House, an Environmental Justice Leaders event, and an annual Symposium. FRI will cultivate relationships with current donors and new prospects to create a donor advisory board to further fundraising efforts.

### Workshop Services

The Asking Different Questions program is well-developed and ready to be deployed as a service to external research communities. This model has already been piloted with workshops at UC Irvine and with UC Institute of Transportation Studies. FRI will grow external partnerships with other universities and research centers by hosting workshops and training sessions.

### University of California Funding

UC funding presents an opportunity for FRI to seed new research ideas and grow projects in new directions. FRI will pursue opportunities under the UC Office of the President such as the Multicampus Research Programs and Initiatives. In partnership with affiliate faculty, FRI will pursue on-campus funding opportunities that can seed projects targeting external funding sources. These can strengthen collaborations across different units.

### UC Davis Campus Funding

FRI's mandate is to serve the entire campus. We believe that it is crucial to acquire buy-in from central campus, deans, and the Office of Research to democratize the work and amplify our impact. Core funding is needed for staffing (faculty director, associate director, research manager, student assistant), administrative costs, events, travel, and communications. This core support allows FRI to aggressively pursue external funding and research partnerships with base administrative costs covered.

## Acknowledgements

Thank you to those who aided this process, including Stephanie Maroney, Abigail Ibarra-Iglesias, and all our Strategic Planning participants

In order to envision and plan the future growth of FRI, this year we have engaged closely with our stakeholders to listen to their ideas and wishes. Here, we present our method and our findings.

## Appendix A: Methods

### Strategic Planning Workshop

On March 1, 2024, we held a Strategic Planning Workshop at FRI which brought our stakeholders together to think collectively of our strengths and opportunities, and determine our objectives for the next five years. We listened to faculty, staff, graduate and undergraduate students across disciplines, as well as community members.

### Attendants

10 Faculty from 9 departments

6 Grad students from 5 programs

2 Undergraduate students from 2 programs

10 Staff

4 community members, including a government agency representative

In total, attendees represented 23 departments.

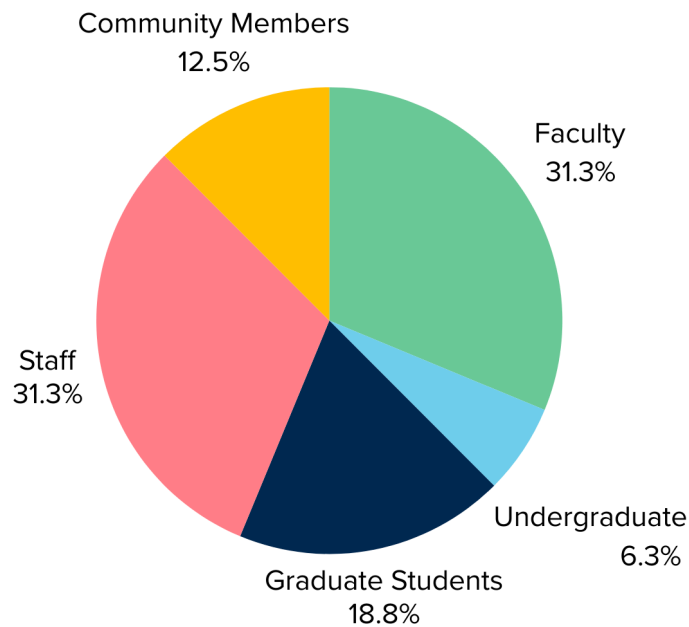


Figure 2. Attendance at Strategic Planning Workshop by role.

### Online Survey

Furthermore, we also sent out an online survey to those who registered to attend but were unable to and to other important stakeholders. However, we received no responses.

### *Strategic Planning Session at 2024 FRI Transformative Research Symposium*

Following up on our Strategic Planning Workshop, we presented our findings at the FRI Transformative Research Symposium on May 10, 2024 held at the Student Community Center. We had over 30 attendees at the session which included faculty, staff, graduate students, undergraduate students and community members. They were split almost evenly between STEM and humanities and social sciences.

### *Outcomes*

Participants shared perspectives on FRI's current programs including the Asking Different Questions (ADQ), Environmental Justice Leaders Program (EJLP) program, and reading groups such as Earthly Feminisms. The EJLP and ADQ in particular were mentioned more frequently and specifically as target programs that can be expanded given its utility in different areas of research. Common themes that emerged from their responses included community-building, social justice learning and promotion, and interdisciplinary collaborations.