The Social Science Research Institute initiates, develops and conducts applied and theoretical research in the social sciences and linguistics, with general area focus on Hawaii, the Pacific Islands, and Asia.

In carrying out this mandate, the SSRI assists faculty in the social sciences by: 1) providing research appointments for limited terms; 2) assisting researchers in determining sources of extramural support; 3) assisting in the preparation of research proposals; 4) administering extramurally funded research grants; 5) sponsoring a publications program for the dissemination of research findings; 6) providing consultation to researchers in survey techniques and design, as well as computer-assisted research activities.

The Institute also tries to maintain links with funding agencies in the United States, especially government agencies and foundations located along the east coast.