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A Message from the Associate Dean of the Honors College and Co-chair of the Service Learning Initiative

Discovery Editors

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A Message from the Associate Dean of the Honors College and Co-chair of the Service Learning Initiative

Service learning is a teaching method that combines learning goals and community service to affect growth both among students and within society. In its five-year existence at the University of Arkansas, the Service-Learning Initiative has been charged with organizing and expanding service-learning-based course offerings. With support from the Honors College, we have expanded those efforts to include service-learning research opportunities. In my dual roles as associate dean of the Honors College and co-chair of the Service-Learning Initiative, I assist faculty and students in discovering connections between learning and community need. I also help students earn recognition for service learning on their transcripts and identify potential funding sources for their research.

Bumpers College faculty are leading students in strong academic research projects that address community needs, both locally and around the world. This issue of *Discovery* highlights three such projects. Laura and Bailey's research projects took on food insecurity—one project in Washington County, Arkansas, and the other 2,200 miles away in Dangriga, Belize. Belize also served as a backdrop for Kelsey's research, which focused on small mammal identification in an effort to develop a baseline inventory for researchers at a national park.

These three projects show that service-learning research possibilities are wide-ranging, depending on community need, student skill set and desired location. Further, interacting with community partners (whether human or small mammal) often results in unforgettable, life-changing experiences for the students. Any individual research project may not completely solve a great problem like food insecurity, but these experiences can move the needle closer to a permanent solution while having a positive impact on both the student and the community.

Thank you, university faculty and staff, Seeds that Feed, Billy Barquedier National Park and Derek Jones for guiding our students through these research projects (as the saying goes, it takes a village). Thank you, *Discovery* editors, for helping the students share these experiences with the world. Finally, thank you, students, for your dedication to these sometimes unconventional research experiences. You're showing Arkansans what we already know here at the University of Arkansas: that when the university and communities come together to address a need through research, great benefits can be generated for all.



Jennie Popp

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jennie Popp". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name and last name clearly legible.

Jennie Popp, Professor, Associate Dean of the Honors College, and Co-chair, Service Learning Initiative.