

# Jennifer Kerpelman

Associate Vice President for Research (AVPR)

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Research and Innovation Center

# Auburn Background

Faculty member in Human Development and Family Science

1999

Associate Dean for Research and Graduate Studies in the College of Human Sciences

- 2018-19 Interim Vice President for Research

2011

Associate Vice President for Research

2024

# Associate Vice President for Research (AVPR) Responsibilities

- Promote and facilitate development of **interdisciplinary/collaborative/team-based research initiatives** across campus.
- Foster a **culture of collaboration and collegiality** between faculty, staff and SVPRED administrators.
- Further develop a **culture of innovation** at the university, supporting efforts to identify, develop and commercialize intellectual property developed from university-based research - **particularly in disciplines that may not have traditionally been frequent developers of intellectual property**.

# AVPR Responsibilities (contd.)

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- Work with SVPRED to:
  - Define and implement a **vision for strategic investment in research opportunities** that will leverage existing areas of expertise on the campus.
  - Identify needs and develop strategies for **university research facilities and related infrastructure**.
  - Help **optimize research operations and structure**, including the identification and implementation of best practices and technologies that will enhance research efficiency and productivity on the campus.
  - Identify strategic opportunities to **support improvements to research lifecycle** (proposal development and submission processes, contracting processes, and research integrity and compliance processes...) .
  - Further **define and implement best practices** for administration of externally-funded projects.

# Auburn University Rural Health Initiative

## Example of a Strong Collaboration



## Auburn University Rural Health Initiative:

*Partnering with communities to increase access to high quality and affordable health and wellness care throughout rural Alabama.*

Website: <https://www.auburn.edu/outreach/ruralhealth/>



- Initiated in 2020
- Partnership with AU Outreach, Alabama Cooperative Extension System, Academic units, Communities
- Will soon exceed \$4M in external funding
- Pilot site with OnMed station in LaFayette, Alabama: *Chambers County Community Health and Wellness Center*
- Engaging faculty and students in outreach, educational and research opportunities
- Encouraging and arranging visits to see the center and the OnMed station
- Expanding across Alabama (adding 4 more OnMed units->West Alabama communities; adding telehealth carts in 10 Southeast Alabama communities)
- Initial funding received toward acquisition of a mobile health clinic

# Remapping Alabama's Rural Health Landscape

- The Challenge:
  - Alabama ranks 44th in healthcare nationally.
  - Alabama is among states with the highest rates of diabetes, obesity, and heart disease.
  - Alabama has high maternal mortality rates, as well as alarming rates of substance use disorder and growing untreated mental health needs.
- The Opportunity:
  - Auburn University, with diverse academic units, is well-positioned to extensively impact the health and well-being of Alabama's residents.
  - The collaboration among University Outreach, ACES, and various academic units accelerates Auburn University's capacity to address health disparities in rural and underserved populations.
- Pilot Site:
  - Students are currently contributing to community-based health assessments, interventions, and wellness education. The first cohort of Rural Health Fellows has been launched.
  - Faculty are beginning to implement community engaged research, outreach scholarship, and programming addressing a range of health topics.
  - Community leadership and community members (teens and adults) are engaging in a range of role, including that of Health Ambassadors, promoting health care access and well-being.

# Making a Tangible Difference

- Auburn University Rural Health Initiative (AUHRI) aligns with Auburn University's commitment to innovation and excellence.
- With a comprehensive approach to healthcare, education, and research, AUHRI is poised to make a lasting impact on the health outcomes of rural Alabamians.

