How does one take an issue and turn it into an impactful project?

1. What are the important issues in a community? (Your local community, or a national or global area where you feel there are important issues to address.)

2. How will the projects be identified?
   Some questions that might help:
   a. Will you work with an affinity group of colleagues? With Mercer’s Center for Community Engagement (Hannah Vann, Dr. Mary Alice Morgan)?
   b. When will you start to identify topics and partners? When will you solidify the projects?
   c. Will you seek out a partner organization or group (foundation, governmental group, NGO, disciplinary society, etc.) to help provide clarity on the issue?
   d. Will a partner organization or group of individuals bring the issue to you?
   e. How important will this issue be to the group it will affect? Who is the intended audience of the research?

3. Once you determine the issue, how can you break it into manageable research questions?
   Some questions that might help:
   a. What is known and unknown? What previous research exists that can guide the development of the research question?
   b. Is there something that a community wants to achieve? What do community members need to know to achieve an outcome? In what format will they need to know the answer?
   c. How can the topic and research question be carved into smaller questions so that undergraduate researchers can contribute and make progress?

4. What can you do to assure that the students working with you on the research have the same understandings of the issues and specific research project as any other partners?

One possible 3-step formula:
(Topic) I am studying _____
(Question) because I want to find out what/why/how _____
(Significance) in order to understand _____.

Sources: