



SERVICE LEARNING AND CIVIC ENGAGEMENT THROUGH HIGHER EDUCATION

KAYLA PALUCHO | UNIVERSITY OF HOUSTON - DOWNTOWN

THE CHEMISTRY OF DRUG ABUSE: SERVICE-LEARNING STUDENTS EDUCATE HIGH SCHOOLERS ON THE 'WHY' TO 'BE AWARE'

ABSTRACT:

The University of Houston–Downtown's service-learning organic chemistry project equips undergraduates to research the science of both prescription and street drugs, then present their findings to Houston high school students. Each semester, students partner with a different high school, raising awareness about the risks of drug abuse and fostering open dialogue through interactive Q&A sessions. This program demonstrates how STEM-based service-learning can bridge classrooms and communities while developing student leadership and communication skills.

THEMATIC FOCUS:

Floods and Droughts: Too much of one thing, not enough of another. How complimentary partnership can fill the gaps.

Gauging the Waters: Using research and assessment to course correct or gain deeper insight.

BIO:

Kayla Palucho is an undergraduate Geosciences major at the University of Houston–Downtown with a strong commitment to service-learning and community engagement. She serves as President of the UHD GeoSociety where she has organized outreach events connecting STEM education with the broader Houston community. As a peer mentor for Dr. Vishakha Shembekar's service-learning project, Kayla has guided students in preparing and delivering presentations on the science of drug abuse to Houston high school audiences, fostering civic responsibility, student leadership, and impactful community dialogue.