



SERVICE LEARNING AND CIVIC ENGAGEMENT THROUGH HIGHER EDUCATION

LUISA APARICIO | UNIVERSITY OF HOUSTON - DOWNTOWN

SCIENCE MADE FUN AND EASY: WHEN COLLEGE AND MIDDLE SCHOOL STUDENTS COLLIDE

ABSTRACT:

The Service Learning Project (SLP) at the University of Houston–Downtown connects college biology students with local inner-city elementary and middle schools to inspire future scientists. Students transform biology topics into age-friendly experiments, fostering curiosity and representation in STEM. This partnership enhances college students' communication, teaching, and confidence while engaging young learners in hands-on science. The project promotes diversity in STEM and strengthens community connections through education and mentorship.

THEMATIC FOCUS:

Convergence and Intersections: How increasing or decreasing hyperconnectivity can impact community engagement.

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

BIO:

Luisa is a junior at the University of Houston–Downtown, pursuing a degree in Chemistry with a concentration in Forensic Science. She has actively participated in three service-learning project presentations, engaging elementary and high school students on topics including the transmission of infectious diseases, forensic science, and the effects of nicotine on teens. She has also shared her experiences at the Impact Learning & Community Engagement Showcase. Beyond academics, she volunteers at her local church, tutoring K–12 students, which has strengthened her communication, leadership, and mentorship skills while fostering a commitment to community engagement.