



SERVICE LEARNING AND CIVIC ENGAGEMENT THROUGH HIGHER EDUCATION

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COMMUNITY SOCIOECONOMIC VULNERABILITY AND UNIVERSITY-COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS: SHIFT AND IMPLICATIONS

ABSTRACT:

According to the 2025 American Health Rankings report, 18.9% of Louisiana residents live in poverty, placing them at increased risk for adverse health and social conditions. Research demonstrates that the resilience of vulnerable populations is strengthened through community-engaged initiatives supported by strong University-Community Partnerships. Such partnerships provide critical resources and support that enable socioeconomically vulnerable communities to endure the effects of negative social determinants of health, harsh environmental conditions, and climate-related changes. The objective of this quality improvement study was to determine whether the university community engagement initiatives are effectively reaching and supporting the most socioeconomically vulnerable populations within our community.

THEMATIC FOCUS:

Shifting Foundations: Modern fundamental changes in how communities form, change, and represent themselves.

BIO:

Dr. Rhoda Reddix is the Director of Service-Learning and Associate Professor in the Biology-Human Medicine Track and the Population Health Management Graduate Certificate Program at Franciscan Missionaries of Our Lady University (FranU) in Baton Rouge, Louisiana. She is an educator, scientist, scholar, and community advocate. She has received the 2024 Outstanding Practitioner Contributions to Service-Learning award in Higher Education and served as a reviewer and member of the editorial boards for the Service-Learning and Community Engagement Journals. Currently, she is the Carnegie Foundation Community Engagement Classification Liaison for FranU and a founding member of the Executive Council for the HEARTSafe Community of Baton Rouge Coalition.