



SERVICE LEARNING AND CIVIC ENGAGEMENT THROUGH HIGHER EDUCATION

RAY ARIA | UNIVERSITY OF HOUSTON - DOWNTOWN

INDUSTRY AS COMMUNITY: SERVICE-BASED LEARNING PROJECTS THAT BRIDGE CLASSROOM AND CLIENT NEEDS

ABSTRACT:

This session highlights the University of Houston–Downtown's MIS 4312 – MIS Capstone Project, where students collaborate with real industry clients on applied projects that bridge classroom learning and community engagement. By tackling authentic organizational challenges, students gain professional experience while partners benefit from innovative solutions. The presentation will share course design strategies, project examples, lessons learned, and practical recommendations for faculty seeking to integrate client-based service-learning into their own teaching and engagement efforts.

THEMATIC FOCUS:

Blockage and Clearance: Physical, infrastructural, financial, or organizational barriers or portals to community engagement.

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

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

BIO:

Dr. Ray Aria is an Assistant Professor of MIS at the University of Houston–Downtown, where he designs and supports service-based courses that integrate industry client projects into the curriculum. With a background in the industry and academia in Computer Science, Management Information Systems, and research, Ray has extensive experience bridging academic learning with applied practice. His teaching emphasizes experiential learning, community partnerships, and student professional development. Through collaborations with local and national organizations and industry partners, Ray has guided students in delivering impactful projects that foster civic responsibility, strengthen community ties, and prepare graduates for success in dynamic professional environments.