



Dr. Charlita Shelton's Bio

Dr. Charlita Shelton, PhD, is a prominent higher education leader and consultant with over 35 years of experience. She served as president of two graduate universities and Her specialties include institutional strategy, strategic advising, leadership development, and executive coaching.

Current and Recent Roles

- **Central Washington University:** Dr. Shelton served as Special Consultant to the President (2026). She also served as Interim Vice President for Equity and Belonging (2024–2026). In this role, she focused on enhancing cultural competence through the training and development of all staff and faculty, advancing anti-racism and social justice initiatives across the campus.
- **Gonzaga University:** During her consultancy at GU, Dr. Shelton served as the Chief of Staff to the President (2021–2024). As a member of the executive team, she managed campus-wide organizational shifts, working with and supporting all functional areas within the university, including leading GU's COVID-19 compliance efforts. Dr. Shelton took on the consultant role of Associate Chief Diversity Officer (2019-2021). In this role, she co-led all of equity and belonging training in addition to the strategic direction to create a more inclusive campus environment.
- **Presidential Leadership:** Dr. Shelton has served as the president of two graduate institutions: University of the Rockies (2008–2015), where she oversaw significant enrollment growth. At Argosy University Atlanta, (2018–2019) she spent a year leading the campus and with a team of campus presidents to ensure the placement students from 28 locations to other institutions after the closing of these campuses.

Educational Background & Early Career

- **U.S. Marine Corps Veteran:** After completing her undergraduate degree, she served in the Marine Corps as a radio operator with a top-secret NATO clearance.

- **Education:**
 - PhD & MA in Human Development from Fielding Graduate University.
 - M.Ed. in Education Administration from National University San Diego.
 - BS in Communications from Western Michigan University.

Research and Advocacy

Dr. Shelton is a founding member of the **LGBTQ+ Presidents in Higher Education** and was recently honored with their Founders Award for her work in creating safe spaces for queer and trans individuals. Her research focuses on structural inequality, student retention (specifically for students of color), and psychological resilience.

Research and Published Themes

Dr. Shelton's scholarship is deeply rooted in **Human Development** and **Organizational Behavior**, with a focus on how systemic factors impact individual success in higher education.

- **Structural Inequality:** She has published works and delivered national presentations exploring the historical and modern mechanisms of structural inequality and social justice. Dr. Shelton has been an international visiting scholar and lecturer on organizational diversity/equity and women in leadership roles.
- **Student Retention:** A primary research interest is the retention and completion rates of students of color, particularly first-generation African American college students.
- **Leadership and Climate:** Her research extends to women in leadership and assessing institutional climate to foster inclusive environments.
- **Resilience:** She has explored psychological resilience within the context of navigating historically exclusionary educational systems.

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Significant Consulting Projects

As an "executive leadership consultant," she typically serves interim or specialized roles to stabilize and transform institutional DEI structures.

- **Design Institute of San Diego:** In 2020, she was hired as a diversity expert to conduct a holistic evaluation of the school's DEI initiatives and develop a long-term strategic improvement plan.
- **Gonzaga University:** Led a data informed research study on alumni and their experiences as an undergraduate student at GU.
- **Central Washington University (CWU):** Her current consultancy involves executive coaching for senior leadership and leading data-informed research initiatives for Human Resources and University Advancement.
- **State-Level Advocacy:** She has been a vocal proponent for Washington State's funding of DEI training, which supports mandatory professional development and campus climate assessments across public institutions.