

Dr. Shawnrece Butler

THE CONVENING ADVANTAGE:

How leaders turn gatherings into networks that create lasting change

Something important is already happening in rooms like this one. Leaders are building relationships across sectors, investing in partnerships, and showing up consistently for shared work. That foundation is real — and it matters.

What becomes possible when we design those gatherings more intentionally? Convening — the purposeful architecture of how we bring people together — can transform existing collaboration into something more powerful: coordinated leadership networks built on deep trust, shared understanding, and the collective capacity to move complex challenges forward together.

The most influential leaders today have recognized something in their own practice: the gatherings they design — not just the strategies they write — are among their most powerful leadership tools. When they convene with intention, they unlock collective intelligence, bridge sectors, and build the kind of trust that sustains collaboration long after the meeting ends.

In this interactive session, we'll start with what you're already building — your relationships, your partnerships, your gathered tables — and explore how to design from that foundation toward something even more powerful. You'll map your own collaboration landscape, identify your highest-leverage convening opportunity, and leave with a practical framework for transforming good gatherings into coordinated action.

Dr. Shawnrece Butler

Assistant Vice President for Opportunity, Empowerment, & People at Northern Michigan University

Dr. Shawnrece Butler is the Assistant Vice President for Opportunity, Empowerment, & People at Northern Michigan University, where she coordinates empowerment opportunities and inclusion efforts across the university and aligns them with the organization's long-term goals. She is also a board member for the Federation of State Humanities Councils, a member of the mParks Unite Committee, and alum of the Lake Superior Leadership Academy Class of 2025 and Rutgers University's MSI Aspiring Leaders Program. Dr. Butler has a proven track record of championing access, opportunity and inclusion at both public and private higher education institutions and in the public and private sectors.

Prior to joining Northern, Dr. Butler served as the Dean of Liberal Arts & the Director of the School of Art, Media, & Communication at Texas A&M University - Corpus Christi. She led a number of interdisciplinary initiatives, which featured various collaborative partnerships across the university with different areas in the humanities and the fine arts.

As the Associate Dean of the College of Arts & Sciences at Stetson University in DeLand, Florida, Dr. Butler collaborated with the Dean on planning college strategic initiatives and provided administrative leadership in the areas of curriculum development, institutional assessment and improvement, human resources, faculty development and performance appraisals, and budget and finance. She also had numerous other leadership roles there including, being the inaugural President of the Stetson University American Association of University Women (AAUW) Branch; an Adviser and Strategist for the Equity and Inclusion Group; and the Founding Director and Program Chair for the Adult Bachelor's Degree Completion Program in Organizational Leadership.