

# AN ANALYSIS OF DONOR MOTIVATION AT A CALIFORNIA COMMUNITY COLLEGE

A Dissertation By

KARL E. FREELS

ORCID iD: 0000-0003-1361-790X

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**Department:**

Department of Educational Leadership

**Committee:**

David Forgues, Chair

Eugene Fujimoto, College of Education

Elizabeth Parker, Orange Coast College

Ron Fremont, California State University, San Bernardino

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**Abstract:**

California community colleges rely on state funding to operate. In recent decades, the annual budget percentage allocated to higher education has decreased. Further reductions may negatively impact community college's ability to offer low-cost, high-quality, and innovative educational practices. One possible way to generate alternative revenue is by implementing and improving philanthropic practice. The purpose of this qualitative, phenomenological study was to explore intrinsic motivations and lived experiences that contributed to individuals philanthropically engaging at a single Southern California community college.

Study participants included 11 donors who contributed \$25,000 or more to the community college in the last 5 years. The study used semistructured interviews and employed simultaneous, value, and in vivo coding to analyze collected data. Results revealed study participants were motivated by close geographical proximity, positive experiences while enrolled, by employment or service in an institutional ambassador capacity, and the overall mission of the community college and the need of its' students. Participants also indicated they had positive experiences after being philanthropically engaged and experienced the desire to improve individual and/or institutional philanthropic practice. Recommendations from study results include improving donor outreach, creating transformative gift proposals, and increasing administrative involvement and support.

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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

Higher education plays an essential role in preparing individuals to participate in the U.S. workforce. In modern times, acquiring a college degree or certificate has become an increasingly important work requirement for many job occupations. This has caused total enrollment in higher education to increase from 7,300,000 in 1970 to 16,800,000 in 2019 (National Center for Education Statistics, 2019). Increased enrollment has coincided with a decrease in the overall percentage of state and federal budget allocated for higher education (Cheslock & Gianneschi, 2008; Lyall & Sell, 2006; McLendon et al., 2009; Public Policy Institute of California, 2015). Further reductions may negatively impact higher education institutions' ability to develop and maintain low cost, high quality, and innovative educational practices.

To insulate themselves from the possibility of future funding changes, colleges need to actively develop alternative sources of revenue. One potential possibility that historically has been intertwined with higher education is philanthropy (Cohen & Brawer, 2003; Thelin, 2011). However, certain collegiate institutions, such as California community colleges, have neglected to cultivate philanthropic relationships with their donor base. Not cultivating these relationships has led to these institutions falling behind other 4-year and for-profit competitors in fundraising strategies and overall money raised. Research conducted on higher education philanthropy suggests intrinsic motivational factors and lived experiences often play a fundamental role in successfully engaging donors (Clotfelter, 2001; Monks, 2003).

The purpose of this study was to better understand the phenomenon of donors philanthropically engaging with a community college campus. It focused on ascertaining intrinsic motivational factors and lived experiences that led individuals to philanthropically engage with Ace Community College (hereafter ACC), a California community college campus. The study also asked donors to describe their experiences after being philanthropically engaged. Information and

understanding gained from this study were used to formulate implications and recommendations related to improving philanthropic practices at the community college level.

### **Background of the Problem**

Higher education institutions have been an integral part of U.S. society since the Colonial Era (Thelin, 2011). Many prestigious 4-year universities, such as Stanford and Vanderbilt, were initially founded and operated through a combination of public and private financial assistance (Thelin, 2011). Having multiple lucrative revenue streams allowed for the creation of endowments that directly supported the maintenance and growth of these institutions. Reliance on endowments has persisted to various degrees into the present day for the majority of public and private higher education institutions (Barr & McClellan, 2018; Carter, 2009).

The majority of institutions have not accumulated enough financial resources to survive on their own. This has led many institutions, including those founded with support from public sources like the California community college system, to rely on funding from the state or government sources. Relying on revenue from state and federal sources becomes problematic when the economy goes into recession or other societal needs take precedence (Li, 2017; Public Policy Institute of California, 2015). McLendon et al. (2009) found although the total amount of state and government aid has increased throughout the years, higher education institutions across the United States are receiving an increasingly reduced proportion of the overall state and federal budgets. The authors attributed this dynamic to multiple societal changes including an expansion in population size and increased costs related to healthcare (McLendon et al., 2009). For California specifically, the Public Policy Institute of California (2015) indicated the total percentage of state funding allotted to higher education has decreased from a high of 18% in 1976 to just 12% in 2016.

A rise in population size and societal costs associated with healthcare, incarceration, and transportation are not the only explanations for the reduction in state and federal funding to higher education. Over the last few decades, U.S. higher education has increasingly become reliant on funding obtained from students, private individuals, or commercial entities. Tuition increases and

steps toward privatization have led to questions surrounding higher education's purpose and sustainability moving forward (Lambert, 2014).

Whereas many University of California (UC) or California State University (CSU) campuses began integrating fundraising into their revenue stream several decades ago, California community colleges only recently began doing so themselves (Angel & Gares, 1989). A primary reason for this is the system's historical reliance on funding from the California state government. This dynamic goes back to the creation of the California Master Plan in 1960, which organized California higher education into three distinct sections (California Department of Education, 1960). Each section was designated with taking a different part of the graduating high school population.

The California Master Plan designated UC campuses with taking the top 12.5% of graduating high school graduates, whereas the top 33.3% were eligible to attend a CSU campus (California Department of Education, 1960). These percentages were calculated using a combination of a student's grade point average and score on a standardized test such as the SAT or ACT (California Department of Education, 1960). California assigned the remaining population to the community college system, where the first 2 years of a student's general education would be completed before transferring to a UC or CSU campus (Cohen & Brawer, 2003).

The California Master Plan also implemented tuition-free education for all California residents regardless of whether they attended a UC, CSU, or community college institution (California Department of Education, 1960). This policy was abandoned in 1978 with the passing of Proposition 13 (Cal. Const. art. XIII A, § 1–7). Proposition 13 prevented counties from assessing property taxes over 1% of the total cash value of the property. Proposition 13 passed because older Californians on fixed incomes were having an increasingly difficult time paying their property taxes due to a combination of population growth, increased housing demand, and inflation (Nichols, 2018). The passage of Proposition 13 reduced the amount of local funds that could be provided to educational institutions, which subsequently led to the underfunding of the Californian education K-16 system and resulted in tuition-free education not being financially tenable at higher education institutions.

After a decade of uncertainty, California passed Proposition 98, which fiscally tied the K-12 and community college system together by forcing the state government to allocate a minimum amount of the General Fund tax revenues each year to these education levels (Cal. Const. art. XVI, § 8). Although this provides a steady source of revenue for the California community college system and has protected it during times of economic recession, the system has been barred from formally charging students tuition to attend. If a student does not qualify for financial assistance through the California College Promise Grant or California College Promise Program, each student is charged a flat enrollment fee for each academic unit taken, which is determined at the state level. A credit unit is the amount of college credit given for a passing grade in a course (Stanford Registrar's Office, 2020). As of 2019, the cost per unit is \$46.

Although California community colleges do have some unique funding options like raising money through local bond measures that are not available to UC or CSU campuses, not being able to charge tuition fees effectively ties these institutions to the fiscal and political health of the state government (Mullin et al., 2015). Any further reductions in this support would raise uncertainty on the ability of California community colleges to offer high-quality experiences to students moving forward. One possible way to remedy this issue is through the implementation and advancement of philanthropic engagement.

Increasing philanthropic engagement would create an alternative source of income that would help reduce reliance on state-provided funds. This additional financial support could be used to create innovative programs that cater to the needs of students, industry needs, or the local community populace. Providing financial assistance to students is a particularly urgent need when one considers student debt continues to increase and has become the largest form of debt in the United States (Thune & Warner, 2019; Walsemann et al., 2015).

Increasing philanthropic engagement in the California community college system is complicated by the role these institutions play in the higher education sector. Many students who attend community colleges obtain a degree or certificate before eventually transferring to a 4-year



university (Marling, 2013). Often, their allegiance also transfers to their eventual alma mater.

Subsequently, these individuals are more likely to philanthropically engage with the 4-year institution they attended rather than the community college in which they had first enrolled. To attract these individuals, California community colleges need to fundamentally change how they engage their donor bases. One possible option is shifting from transactional to transformative philanthropy.

The difference between transactional and transformative giving is critical. Transactional philanthropy, while an important type of fundraising, is formulaic and involves providing a simple proposal to a donor that describes what a donation will accomplish. This type of philanthropy reduces the likelihood of a donor making a large gift and/or engaging over a long duration of time. The paradigm shifts dramatically when a college begins to incorporate transformative philanthropy, in which an institution communicates, creates gift proposals, implements strategies that directly align the beliefs, values, and mission of the institution with those of the donor. This type of philanthropy often results in a closer partnership between organization and donor along with increased engagement and giving. Aligning the beliefs and values of a university to its student, donor, and local community populations is more complicated than it seems. It is an intentional process that needs to be supported throughout the institution by its various constituency groups. Transformative philanthropy has the potential to create relationships that culminate in long-lasting and financially impactful philanthropic interactions.

### **Problem Statement**

The problem this study addressed is the decline in state financial support and the subsequent lack of alternative revenue streams for California community colleges. Further reduction in governmental funding may impact the ability of these institutions to offer low cost, innovative, and quality education. Acquiring knowledge on the role motivation and experience play before and after donors philanthropically engage with a California community college will assist in developing stronger relationships with donor bases.

## **Purpose Statement**

The purpose of this qualitative, phenomenological study was to explore intrinsic motivations and lived experiences that contributed to individuals philanthropically engaging at ACC.

## **Research Questions**

The following two research questions guided this qualitative research study:

1. What intrinsic motivations or lived experiences led donors to be philanthropically involved with ACC?
2. How do donors describe their experience of being philanthropically engaged with ACC?

## **Significance of the Study**

This research contributes to educational practice because it can inform community college presidents, staff, and faculty on how intrinsic motivation and lived experience can impact the overall success of fundraising efforts. For college presidents, knowledge on this topic can lead to the creation of organizational structures that are conducive to allowing transformative philanthropy to occur. This process can occur through changes in the hierarchy of an advancement office or the overall institutional approach to philanthropic engagement. As the California government continues to decrease the overall proportion of the budget allocated to higher education, community college presidents need to be open to the possibility of developing alternative sources of revenue to support their institutions.

Information from this study also benefits individuals currently working in foundation or outreach positions. The results can be used to fundamentally refine the way donors are identified and approached and can be used to demonstrate the viability of philanthropy to upper-level administrators. Faculty members can also learn from this research. Faculty are often involved in obtaining external funding opportunities, whether through grants or private donations. Faculty are also the people who build relationships with students through direct interaction in the classroom. These formative relationships lead to opportunities to create future transformative connections between a donor, in this case, a former student, and the institution. Having college presidents, staff, faculty, and

fundraisers support and help create, transformative philanthropic activities is critical to advancing the current state of philanthropy in the California community college system.

### **Scope of the Study**

In this section, I explain the scope of the study. Specifically, I describe the assumptions, delimitations, and limitations of the study.

### **Assumptions of the Study**

Assumptions are considered to be suppositions a researcher makes as a condition of the study but are not tested. For this study, it was assumed I could clearly discuss philanthropic engagement with participants, and they told the truth to the best of their abilities. Misinformation, overexaggeration, or communication confusion could affect the overall trustworthiness of the collected data. As all participants were given a pseudonym, received no tangible benefits from the research, were given the option to stop participating at any time, and were asked to speak in English, there was minimal concern that participants and I would have trouble communicating or that participants purposefully did not tell the truth. It was also assumed the sample would be representative of the donor population selected at ACC. As criteria-based purposive sampling was used, results are only transferrable to a segment of the overall donor population.

### **Study Delimitations**

Delimitations describe factors the researcher will not study. The first delimitation of this study was the purposeful focus on donors or foundations that had donated \$25,000 or more to ACC. A total of 25 donors at ACC fit this initial requirement. As the goal of this study was to ascertain the impact of intrinsic motivation and lived experience had on philanthropic engagement, it did not make sense to interview people who had not previously engaged with the foundation. Setting a moderately high, minimum monetary amount allowed the study to focus on individuals who had made a large philanthropic impact on the institution.

This study also only involved a single, successful California community college foundation. Focusing on one foundation allowed the research to be based on the role of intrinsic motivation and

lived experience rather than similarities or differences in donor populations at competing institutions. Selecting a successful foundation provided me with access to a larger donor populace and the ability to discover proven fundraising strategies.

### **Study Limitations**

This study had several limitations. The first was the 1-year timeframe to conduct research, which limited the overall scope of the study. Ideally, the study would have continued indefinitely until saturation was reached at multiple California community college institutions. Researching at multiple colleges could have been used to create a model of transformative philanthropy that could then be applied to the California community college system.

A second study limitation was that hermeneutic phenomenology requires the researcher and study participants to clearly discuss their thoughts and feelings with one another. Communication issues such as language barriers, cognition, dishonesty, embarrassment, persecution, or any number of other barriers can affect the quality and trustworthiness of gathered data.

A third limitation was the spread of the 2019 novel coronavirus. Initially, I designed the study to use in-person interviews. Doing so would have increased rapport building, which may have encouraged participants to engage more deeply. In-person interviews would also have allowed me to notice mannerism changes such as body posture or voice intensity. As a result of the 2019 novel coronavirus, all interviews had to take place on the phone or through a virtual program such as Zoom.

A fourth limitation is the ever-changing nature of society when it comes to philanthropy. Because beliefs and values change over time, the specific results of this study may or may not apply to community college foundations operating in the future. Historically, funding for higher education has fluctuated; a financial increase or decrease could change the role and potential impact of philanthropic practices at these institutions.

A final limitation is the reproducibility of this study. Because criteria-based, purposive sampling will be used at a single community college foundation, a similar study done at a different campus may not resemble the current population studied. This is particularly true due to ACC having successful

philanthropic strategies in place that have allowed their foundation to grow. Furthermore, using a semistructured protocol will make it difficult because future researchers may ask different follow-up questions or other prompts with interview participants. Finally, the presence of researcher bias during the data collection and analysis phases may cause results to change if a different researcher conducted a similar study.

### **Definition of Key Terms**

*Altruism.* Altruism is giving time, money, or some other resource without the expectation of receiving something in return.

*Donor.* A donor is an individual who provides a charitable gift.

*Foundation.* A foundation is a tax-exempt 501 I (3) nonprofit that accepts and solicits gifts, donations, and bequests. A foundation is responsible for distributing funds according to school and donation guidelines.

*Fundraising.* Fundraising is the process of gathering voluntary contributions of money or other resources by requesting donations from individuals, businesses, charitable foundations, or governmental agencies.

*Grant.* Grants are nonrepayable funds that are dispersed from one entity to another.

*Philanthropy.* Philanthropy is the desire to promote the welfare of others. It is typically expressed through the donation of time or resources.

*Revenue.* Revenue is the income a business has from normal activities, usually from the sale of goods and services to customers.

*Transactional Philanthropy.* Transactional philanthropy, while an important type of fundraising, is formulaic and involves providing a simple proposal to a donor that describes what a donation will accomplish. This type of philanthropy does not promote the likelihood of a donor making a large gift and/or engaging over a long duration of time.

*Transformative Philanthropy.* Transformative philanthropy includes communication, proposals, or strategies that directly align the beliefs, values, and mission of the institution with those of the

donor. This type of philanthropy often results in a closer partnership between organization and donor along with increased engagement and giving.

### **Organization of the Dissertation**

Chapter 1 provided context on community college philanthropy and defined the problem and purpose of this study. The significance and scope of the study were also provided. Chapter 2 presents a review of the literature related to higher education philanthropy. Chapter 3 contains the research design, including data collection and analysis methods. Chapter 4 presents the study's findings, and Chapter 5 discusses conclusions, interpretations, and recommendations for policy and practice.

## CHAPTER 2

### REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

California community colleges rely heavily on state funds to operate. Reductions in budgetary support from governmental sources will impact the ability of these institutions to offer low cost, innovative, and quality education. The purpose of this qualitative, phenomenological study was to explore how intrinsic motivations and lived experiences led individuals to engage philanthropically with ACC.

This chapter presents the historical and theoretical foundations of this study. A review of empirical research related to higher education philanthropy follows. This chapter concludes with a chapter summary.

#### **Historical and Theoretical Foundations**

In this section, I share the historical and theoretical foundations of this study. Providing the origins and development of higher education philanthropy demonstrates the historic role fundraising has had on collegiate institutions. An analysis of altruism assists in assessing the underlying motivations of individuals who philanthropically engage with higher education institutions.

#### **Historical Foundation**

Philanthropy has played an important role throughout the history of U.S. higher education. It has been responsible for the founding and ongoing support of many public and private institutions. The historical foundation section details how higher education and philanthropy have become intertwined, both from the perspective of 4-year institutions and California community colleges.

#### ***Higher Education***

Collegiate institutions have been a part of the U.S. education system since the Colonial Era (Thelin, 2011). Initially, these schools were limited to young Caucasian men from affluent socioeconomic conditions (Cohen & Brawer, 2013). The primary goal of these institutions was to provide young, white males with an opportunity to interact with other similar members of society

(Cohen & Brawer, 2013). Fees associated with this experience were minimal because colleges maintained a lean budget and had assistance from other revenue streams (Thelin, 2011).

One of the primary sources of alternative revenue throughout the history of U.S. higher education has been philanthropy. Many prestigious institutions, such as Vanderbilt and Stanford, were initially founded through financial donations from private individuals (Thelin, 2011). These funds were often put into endowments and allowed to accrue interest over time. The money was then used to pay expenses, whether by providing financial assistance to students, for campus expansion and maintenance, for faculty and staff hiring, or curriculum creation (Thelin, 2011). The success of philanthropy led to the mindset of creating fundraising teams specifically tasked with approaching, developing, and cultivating relationships with philanthropic individuals (Barr & McClellan, 2018; Carter, 2009).

Though philanthropy has played a role throughout the existence of U.S. higher education, the emphasis on fundraising has recently increased as a result of the general reduction in budgetary support to higher education (Babitz, 2003; Cheslock & Gianneschi, 2008; Lyall & Sell, 2006). In a longitudinal analysis of factors associated with state funding for higher education, McLendon et al. (2009) found although the overall dollar amount provided by states to education has increased overall, higher education has received a reduced portion of the total budget. The authors attributed this dynamic to changing demographic patterns, economic conditions, and educational policies. The study also found political aspects like partisanship, term limits, interest groups, and gubernatorial power have affected state appropriations for higher education (McLendon et al., 2009).

In a more recent quantitative study, Li (2017) analyzed data from all 50 states between the years of 1980 and 2009. The study found times of economic and political turmoil were the most predictive indicators of budget cuts to higher education institutions. Specifically, Li found high unemployment rates or the presence of a unified Democratic or Republican government typically led to reductions in funding. However, Li found it did not matter which party was in charge, only that a



party maintaining a majority typically cut funding for higher education. This finding was attributed to the ease of passing legislative acts when one party was in control of a state government.

### ***Community Colleges***

Even though colleges have been present in the United States since the Colonial Era, community colleges did not come into existence until 1901 with the founding of Joliet Junior College in Illinois (Cohen & Brawer, 2003). Other states have followed the example set by Illinois and, over time, established their version of community colleges. A turning point for the California community college system came in 1960 with the creation of the California Master Plan. The creators of the plan envisioned community colleges as a place to provide technical and vocational training or the general education coursework necessary to acquire a baccalaureate degree from a 4-year institution (California Department of Education, 1960; Milliron et al., 2003). Furthermore, the California Master Plan stated students who attended a public higher education institution would not be charged tuition fees (Cohen & Brawer, 2003). The goal was for a student to acquire a collegiate degree without accruing personal debt.

The fiscal model used by the California Master Plan provided funding to higher education institutions through the collection of property taxes. A combination of population growth, increased housing demand, and inflation led to an increase in property values during the 1960s and 1970s, which subsequently led to increasingly higher taxes (Nichols, 2018). Some Californians, particularly older individuals on a fixed income, began to have difficulty paying these year-to-year increases (Martin, 2006). This dynamic led to the passage of Proposition 13 in 1978. The Proposition, which was passed by 62.6% of the voting population, only allowed counties to assess a maximum of 1% of the total cash value of the property (Cal. Const. art. XIII A, § 1). This amount was based on the 1976 property valuation. Subsequent annual increases could not exceed 2% of the previous year's value unless a change in ownership occurred (Cal. Const. art. XIII A, § 2).

Proposition 13 significantly decreased the amount of county directed money available to the public education system, which effectively ended the practice of not charging students tuition (Cal.

Const. art. XIII A, § 1-7). After a decade of financial uncertainty, California voters passed Proposition 98 in 1988, which provided clarity for California community colleges by directly tying the K-12 and community college systems together (Cal. Const. art. XVI, § 8). In essence, these two systems are guaranteed a minimum of 39% of the annual General Fund tax revenues (Cal. Const. art. XIII A, § 1-7; Cal. Const. art. XVI, § 8). Although this arrangement effectively guarantees a steady source of revenue for California community colleges, the model prevents them from charging tuition fees. Instead, they are only allowed to implement an enrollment fee per credit unit, which is determined by the state. As of 2019, the fee per unit is \$46 if a student does not qualify for financial assistance, which amounts to \$552 annually for a part-time student taking six units a semester and \$1,104 for a full-time student who takes 12 units.

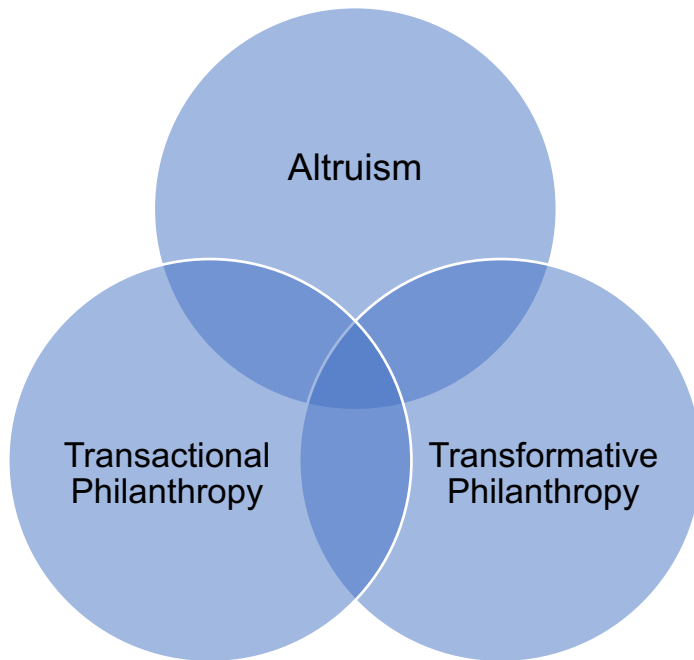
Because California community colleges are unable to implement tuition fees or control the cost per unit, they have been forced to look for alternative sources of revenue to generate additional funds. Though they are allowed to issue bond measures in their local communities, these measures are not always successfully passed, and colleges are limited in how they can use the funds. Some California community colleges have successfully engaged in philanthropic fundraising, but this practice has yet to provide the financial impact that it has for UC or CSU campuses.

A primary reason for the lack of philanthropic impact at the community college level is they rarely concerned themselves with philanthropic fundraising before 1990. They were publicly funded institutions with a guaranteed source of income coming from the California government. Fundraising was seen as a nonessential task. As a result, most community colleges did not create a foundation until the 1980s (Angel & Gares, 1989; Babitz, 2003) Even though philanthropic engagement at the community college level has improved in recent decades, these institutions receive less than 4% of the total amount donated to higher education as a whole (Gallagher, 2014). The steady decline in budget allocation and an overall increase in enrollment and societal need has forced community colleges to begin competing more vigorously with other higher education institutions for philanthropic funds.

## Theoretical Foundation

This study uses altruism, a theory that describes the intrinsic motivation behind donors becoming philanthropically engaged with higher education institutions. Though there is no single universal theory of philanthropy, all contain a component of altruistic behavior. Altruism can be defined as being selfless to promote the welfare of others. Altruistic individuals typically give to people or organizations they believe in without expecting anything in return. Altruistic behavior can be motivated by different reasons. Examples include a desire to improve humanity (Scott & Seglow, 2007) or moral obligation (Ray, 1998). Empathy and prior connection have also been shown to be strong motivators of altruistic behavior (Scott & Seglow, 2007). Although altruistic individuals give without the expectation of receiving, they do tend to acquire benefits in the form of positive mental well-being, an ego boost, or an increase in societal standing. The presence of these benefits can call into question whether an individual is being truly altruistic or is fulfilling self-serving tendencies (Piliavian & Chang, 1990).

This study also uses transactional and transformative philanthropic theoretical models. Transactional philanthropy is typically formulaic and involves providing a simple proposal to a donor that describes what a donation will accomplish. This type of philanthropy has a lower likelihood of a donor making a large gift and/or engaging over a long duration of time. Transformative philanthropy in comparison is communication, proposals, or strategies that directly align the beliefs, values, and mission of the institution with those of the donor. This type of philanthropy often results in a closer partnership between organization and donor along with increased engagement and giving. Although each of these models is useful to fundraisers at higher education institutions, transformative philanthropy is more appealing to sophisticated donors. Figure 1 shows the relationship between altruism, transactional philanthropy, and transformative philanthropy.



*Figure 1. Altruism, Transactional Philanthropy, and Transformative Philanthropy.*

### **Review of the Scholarly Empirical Literature**

The next section provides a review of scholarship about higher education philanthropy.

#### **Institutional Factors**

Research addressing institutional factors that affect philanthropic fundraising in higher education is extensive and relevant to this study. The vast majority of research literature is focused exclusively on 4-year universities or higher education as a whole, not community colleges. This section focuses on addressing institutional factors of (a) wealth and prestige, (b) leadership support, (c) budget and structure, (d) communication, and (e) relationship building.

#### ***Wealth and Prestige***

Some research has linked an institution's overall success in fundraising to its endowment and annual revenue. Wealth is a measure of the fiscal resources an institution has available. The increased level of fundraising success relative to overall wealth can be attributed to having a larger donor populace (Brittingham & Pezzullo, 1990), a larger overall endowment (Liu, 2006), and higher rates of donor engagement (Liu, 2006). Essentially, wealth begets wealth. Dowd and Grant (2007) found little to no correlation between the wealth of an institution and fundraising efforts, however.

Unfortunately, almost all the scholarship in this area is focused on higher education in general. More research needs to be done, particularly at the community college level, to determine the influence institutional wealth has on philanthropic fundraising.

Research has also found the prestige level of an institution can affect philanthropic fundraising (Cheslock & Gianneschi, 2008; Holmes, 2009; Leslie & Ramey, 1988; Liu, 2006). Prestige refers to the widespread societal respect or admiration an institution possesses. A common way for higher education institutions to attract national prestige is through successful athletic programs. Multiple studies have found a correlation between athletic performance and donor giving (Holmes, 2009; Meer & Rosen, 2009; Weerts & Ronca, 2009).

Another possible way for collegiate institutions to gain societal prestige is to have higher levels of student achievement. Baade and Sundberg (1996) found higher levels of student achievement increases success in philanthropic fundraising, whereas Simone (2009) found higher levels of student achievement has minimal to no effect. Because higher education institutions serve a diverse range of communities and student populations, it is unsurprising to see researchers obtain results that differ from one another when it comes to the impact student achievement has on institutional fundraising. These inherent differences in population are a primary reason why it is often difficult to directly implement specific successful fundraising practices from one institution to another.

### ***Leadership Support***

Having the full support of a college president is a critical part of successful fundraising strategies. Multiple studies have found having an involved and supportive president leads to increased rates of alumni giving (Brittingham & Pezzullo, 1990; LaBeouf, 2003; Shuford, 2007). Though most studies on this topic agree on this point, there is some contention over the exact impact a charismatic president has on fundraising. In a quantitative study conducted in 2014, Bastedo et al. found no real evidence of a charismatic president affecting fundraising levels at private 4-year institutions. Although they found some suggestion that this type of individual could make an impact in

atypical organizational structures (i.e., religious colleges), their findings as a whole disagree with the wider scholarship on the topic.

### ***Budget and Structure***

The financial amount allocated to fundraising efforts can impact the overall success a university has in engaging philanthropic individuals. Multiple studies have found a strong connection between the overall amount of money spent on fundraising and money raised (Baade & Sundberg, 1996; Harrison, 1995; Liu, 2006). Other scholarly sources have postulated a major reason behind the success of 4-year institutions in philanthropy is that they have emphasized its importance by investing in fundraising development (Bass, 2003; Drummer & Marshburn, 2014). More research needs to be conducted to determine the effect and cost-effectiveness that institutional spending has on increasing fundraising returns, particularly at the community college level.

Scholarship on philanthropy rarely differentiates structural differences between fundraising offices at 4-year institutions and those at community colleges. Community colleges typically have fewer people who fundraise and underdeveloped alumni engagement programs (Carter, 2009). Although there is some evidence that suggests hiring more employees or establishing shared leadership organizational models can increase fundraising success, Gaskin (2014) found having a vice president of university advancement does not necessarily lead to fundraising success.

### ***Communication***

Philanthropists typically give because someone asked them to do so (Bryant et al., 2003). As a result, it is important for institutions engaged in fundraising to establish a variety of ways to communicate with donors. Some studies have found higher levels of philanthropic success in alumni who attend school functions (Weerts & Ronca, 2007), whereas others have not (Carter, 2009). In one qualitative study, Meer (2011) found a fundraising request is more likely to be successful if both individuals share similarities in race or gender. Research in this area is sparse and not easily generalizable. Further studies need to be conducted to firmly establish the impact of race or gender on successful donor engagement.

It is not unusual for individual philanthropists to approach the university on their own. In a grounded theory study, Gallagher (2014) found 40% of donors who had made a 6- or 7-figure donation had not been approached by an institution before their donation. Although this scenario can be attributed to several causes, the key takeaway is the importance of having information easily accessible to a person who is not yet philanthropically engaged with a university. One example of sharing information is the presence of a website with specific pages about philanthropic opportunities.

Unfortunately, Bucci and Waters (2014) lamented the overall quality of university websites. They found most advancement office websites did not have dialogue opportunities, contained useless information, were not updated often, and lacked an accessible user interface. Bucci and Waters advocated making simple accessibility changes to such websites would improve fundraising efforts.

### ***Relationship Building***

Research has shown establishing a strong relationship with an institution's donor base is critical to successful fundraising. Wells (2015) found creating relationships based on trust, satisfaction, and mutual control are vital to convincing philanthropic individuals to become engaged. Hall (2002) also wrote an article on the role of trust, satisfaction, and commitment on donor engagement. Gallagher (2014) advocated for learning about what inspires each unique donor and creating individually tailored gift proposals that aligns those beliefs and values with that of the institution and the local community. As community colleges are often already involved in community initiatives, creating proposals that provide donors with an opportunity to make an impact is a potential way to increase philanthropic engagement.

### **Donor Characteristics**

The scholarship addressing donor characteristics is extensive and relevant to this study. Once again, much of the literature is focused on higher education in general. In this section, research addressing donor characteristics on (a) age and gender, (b) education, and (c) student experience is examined.

### ***Age and Gender***

Colleges must learn the age of donors who are philanthropically engaged with the institution. These data are useful in the creation of donor profiles and can help assess the success of fundraising strategies. Research on this subject has found donors are increasingly likely to give as they get older (Carter, 2009; Clotfelter, 2001; Weerts & Ronca, 2007). This finding is attributed to older individuals being more financially established than those who are younger.

The scholarship on philanthropy is split on whether men or women are more likely to engage philanthropically with an educational institution. Some studies have found women are more likely to give (Carter, 2009; Holmes, 2009), whereas others have found the same for men (Clotfelter, 2001). The difference in findings can be attributed to the inherent difference in a donor population at a given institution.

### ***Education***

The education level of alumni has been shown to affect the likelihood of an individual becoming a donor. Having multiple degrees from the same institution is a predictor of philanthropic involvement (Hunter et al., 1999). Weerts and Ronca (2009) did find having degrees from multiple institutions or two or more total degrees decreases the overall likelihood of giving. On the other hand, Skari (2011) found alumni who had obtained an associate's degree from a specific community college were found to be twice as likely to give back, and individuals who had previously donated to their 4-year alma mater were four times more likely to also donate to their 2-year alma mater.

### ***Student Experience***

Alumni who maintain positive feelings from their time as students are more likely to give (Skari, 2011). After assessing students from 28 different institutions, Monks (2003) found satisfaction with the undergraduate experience as the most significant predictor of philanthropic giving. Monks also found alumni who had been involved in sports, fraternities, sororities, or lived in dormitories had a higher probability of becoming philanthropically engaged. The correlation between alumni and athletic participation has also been found in other studies (Meer & Rosen, 2009).



Some studies on higher education philanthropy have found transformative experiences while enrolled can cause individuals to want to become philanthropically engaged at a later point in life (Clotfelter, 2001; Monks, 2003). These experiences could include interactions with a specific faculty member, administrator, or student, or an experience that occurred outside of the classroom. These interactions can cement the importance of providing quality education to future students.

The financial situation of a student while enrolled can affect the likelihood of them becoming future donors. Multiple studies have found individuals who take out student loans or receive scholarship funds are less likely to become donors (Marr et al., 2005; Meer & Rosen, 2012). However, not all research agrees with the negative impact of financial aid or scholarships on future donor activity. A quantitative study by Freeland et al. (2015) found even though loans or grants negatively impact the probability of becoming a future donor, financial aid from parents or scholarship funds can increase the likelihood of future giving. Freeland et al. also found students who had donated to a senior gift campaign were more likely to become philanthropically engaged as alumni.

### **Conceptual Framework**

The conceptual framework for this study is grounded in four concepts. The first and most all-encompassing concept is philanthropy. Though this method of revenue acquisition has been historically linked to the Colonial Era of U.S. higher education, institutions more reliant on state funds, such as California community colleges, have not cultivated their donor bases to the same level as many 4-year universities (Cohen & Brawer, 2003; Thelin, 2011). This has resulted in them not achieving the same level of fundraising success.

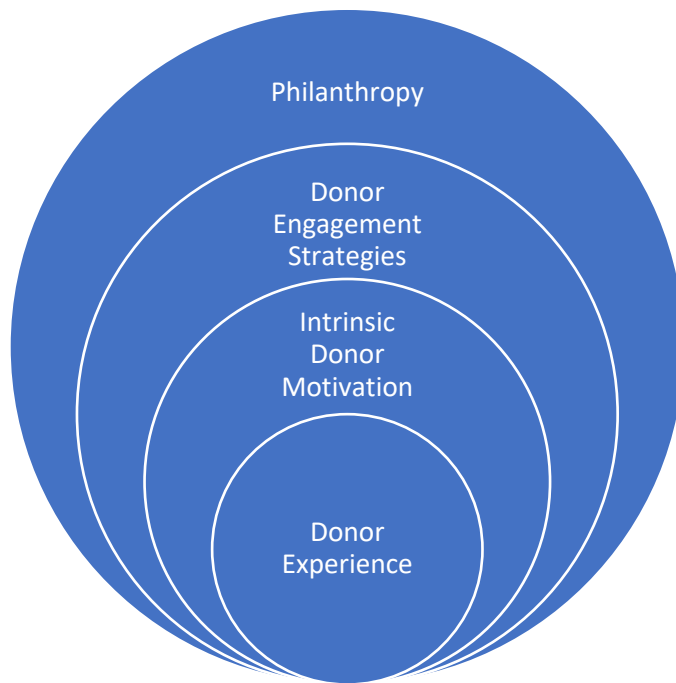
To improve this paradigm, California community colleges need to improve the way they engage donors. Rather than approaching donors with a transactional mindset primarily centered around raising funds for scholarships, community colleges need to create transformative connections that link donors to students or programs that resonate with them on an individual level. Although scholarship fundraising is still essential, focusing on this second concept would allow these

institutions to target individuals, groups, or foundations that have the capacity, willingness, and desire to engage philanthropically at larger levels over longer durations at the community college level.

Donor motivation plays a key role in an individual's choice to engage philanthropically with higher education institutions. Donor motivation, the third concept of this study, refers to the motivating factors that directly lead to a donor becoming involved with an institution. Though numerous, examples can include past experience, personal values, prior enrollment, familial ties, community engagement, or societal standing. All of these motivating factors can directly connect a donor to an institution. More research needs to be done to show the role intrinsic motivation and past experiences play in donors choosing to engage philanthropically with a community college institution.

The final concept in this study is the experience donors have after engaging philanthropically with a community college. Providing donors with opportunities to make a transformative impact in alignment with their own beliefs and values can lead to increased philanthropic engagement. More research needs to be done at the community college level to show how a donor's experience after giving impacts their future philanthropic engagement.

Figure 2 shows the interrelationship between the four concepts of this study. Philanthropy, defined as the desire to promote the welfare of others through the donation of time or resources, encompasses the other three concepts. Donor engagement strategies are strategies used to engage current and potential donors. These strategies are often based on the third concept, intrinsic donor motivation. Donor motivations are factors that lead a philanthropist to engage with a charitable organization. The fourth concept, donor experiences, refers to experiences that follow philanthropic engagement. If positive, these experiences often lead to continued philanthropic engagement.



*Figure 2. Conceptual Framework Diagram of Community College Philanthropy.*

### **Chapter Summary**

Although the literature on higher education philanthropy is extensive, it is not easily generalizable. This has led to many studies directly contradicting one another in their findings. The lack of generalizability is exacerbated when it comes to community colleges due to the majority of literature being focused exclusively on 4-year institutions or higher education as a whole. More research needs to be done at the community college level on topics such as the impact of race and ethnicity on donors choosing to philanthropically engage, how to successfully engage an institution's donor populace, how to implement successful philanthropic strategies, the role of intrinsic motivation and past experience have in a donor deciding to engage philanthropically, and how donors describe the experience of being engaged philanthropically. As studies in the field tend to be difficult to generalize, more research also needs to be done on how the beliefs, values, and overall mission of an institution can be combined with intrinsic donor motivation and past experience to create a new way of approaching philanthropy at the community college level.

## CHAPTER 3

### METHOD OF INQUIRY

California community colleges rely on financial assistance from state sources to operate (California Department of Education, 1960). Reduction in this support could threaten the ability of these institutions to offer low cost, innovative, and quality education. Increasing philanthropic engagement is a way for California community colleges to generate alternative revenue that is not directly tied to government sources.

The purpose of this qualitative, phenomenological study was to explore intrinsic motivations and lived experiences that led individuals to philanthropically engage with ACC. The study had two research questions:

1. What intrinsic motivations or lived experiences led donors to be philanthropically involved with ACC?
2. How do donors describe their experience in being philanthropically engaged with ACC?

In this chapter, I first present the methodology for this study including a discussion of its philosophical foundations. Next, I describe the research design in the selected methodological approach. Following the research design, I detail the specific research methods that were used in the study. This description includes information about the setting, sample, data collection (instrumentation, procedure), data analysis (validity, trustworthiness), and the role of the researcher. I conclude with a chapter summary.

#### **Qualitative Research**

The qualitative research method refers to research focused on collecting the lived experience of an individual or group (Creswell, 2013, 2014). Rather than examining the relationship among different variables as in quantitative research, qualitative researchers attempt to discern the meaning participants make about a specific topic or situation they have experienced. A core component of qualitative research is relativism: the concept of individuals internally constructing reality based on personal characteristics, beliefs, and experiences (Mosteller, 2008). These shared attributes can be organized into codes, categories, and themes to help explain a localized phenomenon (Creswell,

2013; Saldaña, 2013). Findings are a representation of reality because the individual or group being interviewed constructed it internally themselves.

Selecting an interpretative framework best suited for the data being collected is essential when conducting qualitative research. Each framework has different ontological, epistemological, axiological, and methodological beliefs (Creswell, 2013; Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). This study used a social constructivism framework. In social constructivism, researchers intentionally create broad, open-ended questions that allow participants to construct and share their lived experiences (Creswell, 2013). Researchers then take the subsequent data and interpret them through their world lens. According to Creswell (2013), the researcher's intent is to "make sense of (or interpret) the meaning others have about the world" (p. 25).

Researchers who use the social constructivism framework believe individuals can create multiple realities based on their own experiences or interactions with the world (Creswell, 2013). As stated previously, these are true representations of reality due to them being internally constructed by an individual or group. This reality is revealed to the researcher through the use of interviews, observation, or text analysis. Individual values are negotiated and honored by the researcher and study participants throughout the entire research process.

There are multiple strengths and limitations to qualitative research. A large amount of data can be collected, organized, and conveyed to others through the use of rich, thick description (Gertz, 1973; Ryle, 1949). Researchers are also able to explore phenomena that arise naturally, outside the initial protocol. Rich, thick descriptions and exploring phenomena that arise outside the protocol provide an opportunity to obtain a deeper understanding of the lived experience. As the data are based on human experience or meaning, findings can be used to help explain the "why" of results from other studies that are statistical. Researchers are also able to take collected data back to participants through the use of member checking to ensure accuracy and trustworthiness (Creswell, 2014). Finally, though not generalizable to the wider population, results from qualitative research are potentially transferrable to similar populations.

Qualitative research does have several limitations associated with it. The quality of data gathered tends to be highly subjective due to the inherent bias in working with human subjects (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). This bias needs to be recognized, acknowledged, and understood by the author both during research and when presenting results (Tuohy et al., 2013). Also, qualitative research can be time-consuming, and replication of study protocol can be difficult due to the human aspect of the research. Because the goal of this research method is to gather the experience or meaning a particular individual or group ascribes to the phenomenon of giving to a single California community college, results cannot be generalized to the wider populace, as is possible in quantitative research (Patton, 2002).

For this study, a qualitative methodology was the best choice due to the limited population size of the demographic being studied and the desire to acquire lived experience as a means of exploring the phenomenon of philanthropic engagement at ACC. A quantitative study would not be ideal due to the relatively small size of the targeted demographic population. Furthermore, the goal of this study was to collect lived experience, not measure donor satisfaction or engagement levels.

### **Research Design**

There are many different research designs in qualitative methodology. Examples include narrative research, phenomenology, grounded theory, ethnography, and case study. Each design involves different methods of data collection and analysis. For this study, I chose a phenomenological research design.

I decided to collect the lived experience of donors who have philanthropically donated \$25,000 or more at ACC. Exploration of this phenomenon is important for several reasons. Although charitable giving to higher education exceeded \$49 billion in the 2019-20 fiscal year, only 1.5% of that total was directed to 2-year institutions (Council for Aid to Education, 2019). This means that community colleges as a whole have a less engaged donor base, particularly with donors who met the minimum criteria to participate in this research study. Learning more about the intrinsic motivation and lived

experiences that led these donors to be philanthropically involved with a 2-year institution would be useful to similar colleges in identifying and engaging their respective donor bases.

A second reason to explore the phenomenon of donors philanthropically engaging with ACC is the overall success that the institution has had in its fundraising efforts. According to a publication from ACC, its foundation has accumulated an endowment of over \$32,000,000. These numbers demonstrate ACC has implemented fundraising strategies that are effective in recruiting, retaining, and engaging its donor base. Exploring these strategies in conjunction with learning about the role of intrinsic motivation and lived experience play in donors' philanthropic engagement would guide other 2-year institutions on how to develop and grow their philanthropic fundraising efforts.

The phenomenological research design focuses on the identification and collection of a human phenomenon (van Manen, 1997, 2014). Once data have been collected from a group of individuals who have experienced the same phenomenon, in this case choosing to donate \$25,000 or more in a 5-year timeframe to ACC rather than a 4-year institution or other charitable foundation, a composite description is created that is representative of this group's unique experience and perspective. According to van Manen (1997), "Phenomenology aims at gaining a deeper understanding of the nature or meaning of our everyday experiences" (p. 9).

There are two main approaches to phenomenology: hermeneutic and transcendental. The primary difference between the two is how the researcher interprets the collected data. For hermeneutic phenomenology, the researcher actively interprets the data using their knowledge, experience, and background (van Manen, 1997, 2014). Essentially, the researcher presents data to readers through the lens of their perspective. Transcendental phenomenology fundamentally differs from hermeneutic in that it requires researchers to focus less on interpretation and more on acquiring and describing the exact experience of participants (Moustakas, 1994). This process involves the researcher using techniques such as epoche to remove their voice from the collected data.

I employed hermeneutic phenomenology because I desired to acquire and interpret the lived experience of donors who have been philanthropically engaged with ACC. This design allowed me to

use my background and experience in higher education philanthropy rather than bracketing it out, which would be necessary for a transcendental phenomenological research design. Furthermore, using hermeneutic phenomenology allowed me to formulate policy recommendations based on a combination of the interpreted data and my background.

Hermeneutic phenomenology has several strengths associated with it. It provides the researcher with an opportunity to gain a deeper understanding of memory (van Manen, 1997, 2014). The memories can be used in conjunction with other data to help understand and bring meaning to a shared experience among multiple individuals. This allows misconceptions related to an experience to be exposed and allows silenced voices an opportunity to be heard (Smith et al., 2009). The researcher also has the opportunity to bring results back to participants before publishing. The use of member checking allows for a more realistic and trustworthy representation of the shared lived experience to emerge (Creswell, 2014).

Hermeneutic phenomenology does have multiple limitations associated with it. Both the researcher and participants need to be able to clearly discuss their thoughts and feelings with one another. Language barriers, age, cognition, dishonesty, embarrassment, persecution, or other communication barriers can affect the quality and trustworthiness of the gathered data. Results also tend to not be generalizable and can contain researcher bias (Wertz, 2011). According to Laverty (2003), "The methodology may become more of a labyrinth than a cycle and the danger of getting lost in the 'obtuse' and 'incomprehensible' is a real one" (p. 15). Awareness of both strengths and limitations assisted me in using the hermeneutic phenomenological research design in this study.

### **Research Methods**

In this section, the specific research methods that were used to apply hermeneutic phenomenology in this study are described. Specifically, the setting, sample, data collection, data analysis, and steps taken to ensure validity or trustworthiness will be discussed.



## Setting

The context for the study was ACC, a California community college. This particular community college was chosen due to its overall success in fundraising efforts, which have culminated in having a foundation with an endowment of more than \$32,000,000. Selecting a community college with an already successful foundation allowed me to have access to a larger donor pool and provided an opportunity to discover fundraising strategies that have already proven successful and viable.

As of Fall 2017, ACC reported a total enrollment of more than 20,000 students. Of the approximately 20,000 students, 30% identified as Hispanic/Latino, 30% as White/Non-Hispanic, 20% as Asian/Pacific Islander, and less than 2% identified as Black or African American or as American Indian or Alaska Native. The remaining enrolled students identified as two or more races or as unknown/other. A slight majority of students identified as male. Over 85% of students were age 30 or younger. More than half of the students attended school part time.

ACC awarded approximately 5,000 associate degrees or certificates in 2017–2018. More than 1,500 students transferred from ACC to a public or private 4-year university. The majority transferred to the CSU system. Data for students transferring to an in-state private school or out of state were unavailable.

The ACC Foundation reported raising over \$10,000,000 in the 2017–2018 fiscal year. Of this amount, two thirds were cash gifts, and the remainder came in the form of equipment donations. Overall, the foundation has an endowment valued at over \$32,000,000.

## Sample

The goal of this study was to collect the lived experience of donors who have been philanthropically engaged with ACC. Only donors who (a) had cumulatively donated \$25,000 or more to ACC, (b) had a valid mail or email address registered with ACC, (c) could meet online via Zoom or on the phone, and (d) were willing to participate in the study were considered as participants.

A minimum monetary amount of \$25,000 was set based on the available donor pool and to limit study participation to top-contributing donors. Limiting study participants to those who could be

contacted by mail or email assisted in recruitment for this study. Due to the 2019 novel coronavirus, all interviews had to take place online via Zoom or on the phone instead of in-person as originally intended. No incentives were offered for participation in this study; all participation was voluntary, and participants were provided the opportunity to leave at any time without consequence. The study criteria allowed me to discover, interpret, and share the phenomenon and lived experience of those making a large philanthropic impact at ACC.

A nonprobability, homogenous purposive sampling procedure was used to interview donors who fit the criteria for inclusion (Creswell, 2013). The main strength of purposive sampling is the ability to gather individuals together who share a common characteristic or experience. This allows for the possibility of a narrative that represents the collective lived experience of a targeted group. As the study was limited to individuals who have philanthropically engaged with ACC at larger giving levels, using a nonprobability, homogenous sampling procedure ensured this requirement was met.

Hermeneutic phenomenology calls for research to be conducted until saturation is reached (Polkinghorne, 1989; van Manen, 1997). Saturation is the point where no additional information arises from adding additional participants. For this study, 11 donors were interviewed. I analyzed the data and broke them down into codes, categories, and themes.

A total of 25 potential participants were identified through collaborative efforts with ACC staff. Once identified, each was contacted via letter (see Appendix A) and through email, both of which stated (a) the purpose of the study, (b) participation requirements, and (c) researcher background. Eleven participants responded and agreed to participate in the study. When a participant agreed to participate, I worked with them to schedule a time and date for the interview. All were asked to sign an informed consent form (see Appendix B).

Before conducting the study, approval from the Institutional Review Board of ACC and California State University, Fullerton was needed to ensure no participants were harmed as a result of the research process. Donors who participated were given the option of selecting a pseudonym for the study. Pseudonyms were selected for them if participants declined to choose. If a chosen

pseudonym was the actual name of another participant, I reserved the right to change the pseudonym that had been selected. The use of pseudonyms helps ensure the identities of participants remain confidential.

## **Data Collection and Management**

This section will provide an overview of instrumentation, procedures for data collection, and data management strategies.

### ***Instrumentation***

This phenomenological study relied on interviews conducted with individuals who have been engaged philanthropically with ACC. Participants who agreed to join the study were asked to complete a one-on-one 45- to 60-minute semistructured online or phone interview (see Appendix C). Some participants were also asked to participate in a 15- to 30-minute online or phone follow-up interview at a later date. The questions were open-ended, and the interview protocol was designed to acquire the participant's lived experience (van Manen, 1997). Semistructured interviews were used in this study, so I could pursue topics that arose holistically outside of the original interview protocol (Creswell, 2013).

### ***Procedures***

Phenomenology recommends studies have between 10 and 20 participants to reach saturation (van Manen, 1997). I contacted all participants who responded to the letter or email sent from ACC and fit the following criteria: (a) had cumulatively donated \$25,000 to ACC, (b) had a valid mail or email address registered with ACC, (c) could meet online via zoom or over the phone for an interview, and (d) were willing to participate in the study. All of the interviews were conducted online or on the phone at a time that was convenient for both the participant and the researcher. Follow-up interviews were also done online via Zoom or on the phone. I followed the interview protocol at all times.

Each interview began with rapport building between myself and the interviewee. I introduced myself and provided contextual information about the study. Participants were also asked to select a pseudonym and to confirm they were willing to proceed with participating in the study. Once rapport

had been built and verbal consent to record was provided, I started the recording devices and began following the interview protocol.

### ***Data Management***

Audio recordings of the interviews were collected and stored on a password-protected computer. Upon completion of the subject interviews, I transcribed the recordings. Steps were taken to ensure no identifiable information about participants was left on the finished transcripts. Transcripts and original recordings were kept indefinitely on my password-protected computer.

### **Data Analysis and Interpretation**

This section will provide an overview of data analysis, trustworthiness, and the role of the researcher.

#### ***Data Analysis***

Collecting, organizing, and analyzing data are all critical parts of the research process. According to Creswell (2013), “The processes of data collection, data analyses, and report writing are not distinct steps in the process—they are interrelated and often go on simultaneously in a research project” (p. 182). All coding was done by hand and without the use of additional software.

The first step in the data analysis process was to organize the transcript files after interviews had been fully transcribed. I then read through each of the transcripts and begin forming initial codes. Codes (or coding) “involves aggregating the text or visual data into small categories of information, seeking evidence for the code from different databases being used in the study, and then assigning a label to the code” (Creswell, 2013, p. 184). This study used simultaneous coding, values coding, and in vivo coding. Simultaneous coding refers to the “application of two or more codes applied to sequential units of qualitative data” (Saldaña, 2013, p. 82) and is “a way of applying multiple codes and/or coding methods, if and when needed, to complex passages of qualitative data” (p. 83). Values coding refers to the “application of codes onto qualitative data that reflect a participant’s values, attitudes, and beliefs, representing his or her perspectives or worldview” (Saldaña, 2013, p. 110). The third coding method, in vivo, “refers to a word or short phrase from the actual language found in the

qualitative data record” (Saldaña, 2013, p. 91). In vivo was selected to “prioritize and honor the participant’s voice” (Saldaña, 2013, p. 91).

Conducting a preliminary research analysis and using the coding methods mentioned allowed for a better understanding of the inherent similarities and differences between research participants. This knowledge was then used to identify different conceptual categories in the data. These categories and codes were then used to identify key emergent themes that arose from the research. Once the data were coded and themes identified, I began the process of interpretation. This involved creating a description of the collective experience and developing a narrative of the phenomenon itself (Creswell, 2013).

### ***Procedures to Ensure Trustworthiness***

To ensure trustworthiness, this study incorporated multiple strategies. The first was the inclusion of member checking. This strategy involved taking major findings, themes, or other important information back to six participants (Creswell, 2014) through follow-up interviews online via Zoom or by phone. Participants were allowed an opportunity to comment on the findings and were allowed to add information that may have been omitted during the initial interview. Using member checking with six participants helped ensure findings of this qualitative study are accurate and trustworthy.

A second strategy used to improve trustworthiness was conveying findings through the use of rich, thick descriptions. Rich, thick description allowed for enhanced understanding of lived experience through the inclusion of greater detail. This was done by adding detailed descriptions or by offering multiple perspectives on a prevailing theme. Incorporating rich, thick description allows readers to acquire a more comprehensive sense of the topic being researched.

The final step to help improve trustworthiness was the use of contemporaneous notes both before and after each interview. This type of notetaking allows the researcher to remember details that would otherwise not be recorded, such as body posture, facial expressions, mood, or overall atmosphere. This information assisted me in providing rich, thick description.

### ***Role of the Researcher***

The research in this study focused on individuals who have been engaged philanthropically at ACC. Because the topic is rooted in higher education philanthropy, it is important to note I am a trustee of my family's private foundation. This role involves financial oversight, grant management, and outcome review. Though the foundation has never donated money directly to ACC or any other California community college, it has financially supported a variety of different funding opportunities at both the K-12 level and the CSU system.

My role and the experience that accompanies it may have affected me and this study in multiple ways. Being involved in the higher education sector provided me with increased insight when it comes to the impact that funding has on institutional stability. Furthermore, my role in the foundation provided a unique perspective on how philanthropy can fundamentally support the mission and values of an institution. I used my knowledge in these areas to create interview questions designed to gather information on motivation and experiences that led to philanthropic engagement at ACC.

There are several possible disadvantages to my prior association with the family foundation. My role as trustee caused me to firmly believe California community colleges need to increase their fundraising efforts through the use of updated, transformative practices. Although recommendations from this study are guided by the data accumulated through research, I have not come to this perspective as a result of the study data. I disclosed my role in the family foundation to all study participants before the interview started. My disclosure may have resulted in participants choosing not to share information or not be completely truthful in describing the impact of motivation and experience on their giving. Contemporaneous notes, member checking, and follow-up interviews assisted in improving the overall trustworthiness of the data.

I have attended only one higher education institution—California State University, Fullerton. Furthermore, my undergraduate and graduate research was focused on the discipline of history rather than education. It is worth noting I know several people who were previously students at a California community college or have worked in the California community college system. Though

these individuals had little contact with the research process, their possible influence on me must be mentioned. Most of these individuals had positive experiences with the community college system. Their narratives have likely contributed to my optimistic outlook about the future of philanthropy in the California community college system.

### **Chapter Summary**

The focus of this chapter was to describe the methodology and methods associated with this study. Reductions in financing have caused California community colleges to begin looking for alternative sources of revenue such as philanthropy. Raising money in this manner has proven difficult due to the inherent differences between philanthropic practices and population demographics at 2- and 4-year institutions. Learning about the specific motivations or experiences that caused donors to engage philanthropically with ACC may prove useful in attracting new donors. The research findings of this study are presented in Chapter 4.

## CHAPTER 4

### FINDINGS

The purpose of this qualitative, phenomenological study was to explore intrinsic motivations and lived experiences that contributed to individuals' philanthropic engagement with Ace Community College (ACC). The study also sought to identify how donors described their philanthropic engagement experiences. The knowledge acquired will assist California community colleges in creating stronger relationships with current and future donors. The study was guided by two research questions:

1. What intrinsic motivations or lived experiences led donors to be philanthropically engaged with ACC?
2. How do donors describe their experience in being philanthropically engaged with ACC?

Participants were limited to donors at a single California community college campus who (a) had cumulatively donated \$25,000 or more to ACC, (b) could meet online or over the phone for an interview, and (c) were willing to participate in the study. A total of 25 donors fit the listed criteria; each was contacted by the community college's foundation office through the mail and by the researcher through email. A total of 11 responded either by email or phone that they were willing to participate in the study. A total of six interviews were held on Zoom, and five were held on the phone. All were recorded using Zoom and QuickTime. The study used one-on-one, semistructured interviews.

In this chapter, I present findings for each of the two research questions. I then conclude with a chapter summary.

#### Research Question 1

In this section, I focus on findings associated with the first research question: What intrinsic motivations or lived experiences led donors to be philanthropically engaged with ACC? The question was designed to discover what led donors to initially engage with the college.

After coding and categorizing the data, I identified three main themes for Research Question 1. The first theme was the role of community, which referred to living near campus and direct



involvement with the ACC campus. The second theme was the impact of positive experiences. This theme included participants' experiences as students, employees, or citizens of the local community. The final theme in the data related to Research Question 1 was the conscious choice to philanthropically engage with a community college instead of a 4-year university. This theme included the role of community colleges in society; the specific needs of community college students; and the influence of other motivations such as religion, philosophy, and generational giving on donors who chose to philanthropically engage with ACC.

### **Theme 1: The Role of Community**

The role of community involved the impact of living near ACC and direct involvement with the campus itself. These location-based concepts created intrinsic motivations or experiences that culminated in philanthropic engagement with ACC. Ten participants grew up near campus or were living within a 15-mile radius of ACC at the time of the study. This close geographical proximity played a pivotal role in creating opportunities for participants to have meaningful connections with the college. I asked J how he first learned about ACC:

If you live in this community, you're generally aware of what's going on in the world. It's hard to miss ACC. It's hard not to be aware of it. It's a big campus, and my job required me to be out and about quite a bit so I literally drive by it regularly. I became aware of the college's presence and the cultural amenities that it offers. I was just being a citizen of the community.

Jeb was also introduced to ACC due to her close geographical proximity. She told me the story of how she became initially aware and subsequently philanthropically engaged with the college. Jeb had lived in the area for more than 60 years and was asked to host visiting Olympic athletes who needed a place to stay. Her volunteer efforts led her to meet ACC's president and they became good friends. This relationship developed over time and eventually led Jeb to provide financial support for student scholarships and the creation of a building on campus.

Living locally also led Mike and Suzie to become philanthropically engaged with ACC. Mike became employed at ACC and moved to the local geographic area several years after being hired. I

asked him if his philanthropic involvement changed after moving. He said, “Living closer has encouraged me to be more engaged since we live right in the middle of this community.”

Like Jeb, Suzie lived close to the college and although she did not attend herself, Suzie’s family was involved with ACC. She shared:

All of my children ended up attending ACC Community College and then transferring. Them attending is the reason I got involved. The first year that my daughter was there, she got onto the President’s Council and subsequently was elected to the Board of Trustees for the district as a student representative. She attended many functions around the college district and got acquainted with all of the college presidents. She was very involved, and I often would go with her if I was free. The events were held all over the county. I went to these events in addition to me being already involved in the community. A main reason I give to campus is because all of my children attended there and it’s in the community I live in. I could be donating to another local university, but I focus on ACC since I live near campus.

Suzie’s participation in events with her daughter led her to be invited to become an ACC Foundation Board member.

Living in the community and being invited to join the foundation board played a role in engaging two other study participants. The first, Emlyn, moved to the area as an adult. She became involved in a community-based organization that raised money to provide young children with scholarships to a local school. During a fundraiser, she was introduced to the ACC president and foundation director. Emlyn and the two administrators had lunch a week later, and she was asked to join the college’s foundation board. Emlyn felt honored and accepted this offer. She became a financial supporter of the college following the first board meeting. Emlyn learned from her experience on the foundation board. She said:

We are not always aware of what we’re capable of doing and it was just about taking advantage of opportunities and getting involved in things. It’s like a series of rabbit holes. You get involved with one thing and then that piques an interest in something else and so on. My

board experience has been one that has offered me learning possibilities, leadership possibilities, and possibilities to grow as a person and ambassador for ACC.

The experience of being on the board and being engaged philanthropically—it's almost like a symbiotic relationship. I benefit from them. They benefit from me. Because of them, I have been able to experience various opportunities and been exposed to and permitted to be exposed to some very meaningful activities and my engagement has been financially beneficial to ACC. It's a win-win.

Sun also had a positive experience as a foundation board member. They stated:

I'm an entrepreneur and somewhere around the early 1990s, my business had grown to the point where my workforce was between 200–300 people. The demographic of the workforce closely resembled the local high school district. We had something like 44 different nationalities in the company. It came to my attention that we have a very high dropout rate, especially among minorities. The idea was to create a program where these students could be exposed to the realities of what they were trying to be and what they were trying to do.

Students would come in twice a year and we would provide a lecture about the reality of working in the real world. They would learn about marketing and would be given an opportunity to solve a problem by people in my organization. The presentation was mentored by students from the Department of Speech at ACC. The program was quite successful. Everybody seemed to love it. It lasted for about 10 years. It was quite an honor to be a part of it. I was just absolutely humbled by it.

In 2000, I was invited to become a member of the foundation board. I felt honored, I had a very positive reaction. The philanthropic work I've done with the college has always been directly in conjunction with the foundation board. That gives you an idea of how I became acquainted with ACC and how I am still associated with the college to this day.

For each of these participants, geographic location played an essential role in establishing ties between the donor and ACC. For J, Jeb, Mike, and Suzie, local proximity led them to become aware

of the college and was a motivating factor in their decision to philanthropically engage with the college. Although Emlyn and Sun did not become donors until after joining the foundation board, they initially became involved with ACC through other community-based philanthropic organizations. The consistent presence of community and its role in providing motivation or experiences that led to philanthropic engagement was a key theme related to Research Question 1.

## **Theme 2: The Impact of Positive Experiences**

Another critical theme that arose from the data related to Research Question 1 was the impact of having positive experiences in association with ACC and its employees. For all 11 study participants, having positive experiences or establishing relationships with people associated with the college were critical factors in deciding to become philanthropically engaged with ACC. This theme comprised two categories: the first was the formation of positive experiences while attending ACC as a student, and the second was the formation of positive experiences as an employee of the college.

### ***Positive Experience and/or Relationships as a Student***

Seven participants indicated they had attended ACC at some point during their lifetime. Two participants attended directly after graduating high school, two after becoming employed at the college, and three later in life. All had positive experiences that played a role in them deciding to philanthropically engage with ACC.

**Attending ACC After Graduating From High School.** D and Marlene grew up locally and attended the college directly after graduating from high school. D, who would later work as a high-level administrator at the college, enjoyed his time as a student and was very involved in academics, student governance, and as a member of a sports team. He shared, "I grew up in the neighborhood and attended ACC after graduating from high school. My time there was great; I interacted a lot with faculty, staff, and fellow students." After acquiring an associate's degree at the college, D decided to transfer to a prestigious university where he earned bachelor's and master's degrees. D's positive experiences as an ACC student motivated him to return to the college as an employee and later to become philanthropically involved.

Although Marlene followed a similar path in attending ACC after high school, her educational experience was quite different. Marlene did not come in with an explicit educational goal in mind. She said:

My family didn't really promote going to college. So rather than going to a local CSU, it was pretty much just go to this. Like what else was I going to do? I didn't have a job. So I just went to ACC.

Marlene worked in the college library as a student assistant and enjoyed her time as a student. She shared:

My experiences as a student at ACC were very positive overall, I think. I got my bachelor's and master's at [a local CSU], but I think that at ACC I had a much closer relationship with students. In general, the staff and faculty relationships were much more than just taking a class. It was very comfortable.

Marlene decided to pursue a career in counseling after acquiring her master's degree. She met her husband who worked in the library at ACC. She said:

I always gravitated more towards a community college level than the lower grades or even 4-year colleges. I was married for a while and then when my husband passed away, I came into some money. He had worked in the library too. So that's when I decided to donate in honor of him.

Marlene's positive experiences as a student, along with wanting to honor her husband who had worked in the college library, motivated her to philanthropically engage with ACC decades after her initial time at the college.

**Attending ACC After Becoming Employed at ACC.** Mike and Archie took recreational classes after becoming employed at ACC. Mike, who took classes in Spanish and guitar, was extremely impressed with the level of instruction in his courses. He said:

I attended recreational classes as an employee. The instructors were awesome; just really great instructors. This is one of the things I love most about community colleges. The

instructors were very engaged with their students, they truly had joy in teaching, and it seemed like they were there to help students learn whatever their subject matter was. I can honestly say I've had some of the best educational experiences at community colleges.

Although Archie did not talk at length about his time as a student, he did mention he had taken several courses while employed as an instructor at the college. At that point in his life, he was "taking stuff for fun." Archie enjoyed his time in the classroom and believed "the teachers at ACC are really good." After several years as a faculty member, Archie became a senior administrator. His positive experiences as an employee and student motivated him to become philanthropically involved with the campus.

**Attending ACC Later in Life.** Three participants attended ACC later in life for very different reasons. Emlyn took a course as a direct result of her participation on the college's foundation board. She shared:

I decided after being on the board for about 15 years, to take a class. It was a question of both need and curiosity. It was needed because I never took a computer class; I was self-taught when it came to computers and I had need of using more sophisticated programs for some of the things I was doing. So, I took a basic computer class.

I took the class and was beyond delighted with the instructor. It was a wonderful, wonderful experience. The professor was very passionate and knowledgeable. She was available and encouraged us as students to reach out to her anytime should we have questions about the homework or anything else. She made it her business to arrive a half hour early prior to each class meeting so that she could be available should anyone have a question. She would also stay another half hour after class for the same reason.

I did not reveal I was on the board until the second to last class was over. I opted to wait, and I spoke to her afterwards and told her how extraordinarily impressed I was with the experience and with her and how it just enhanced the respect I had for ACC and probably made me a better ambassador, having had the experience of taking the class and in her

approach to teaching. I don't know if she's still there, but she certainly made a difference in my life in terms of my range of knowledge, technology, and in terms of being a student and having an instructor of that quality.

I then went back to the board and said "I encourage all of you to do this because I think it might offer you an enhanced understanding of how our students are our clients and how we service our clients rather than being just a removed body that functions independent of everything. At least you would know from firsthand experience." I would say that if I compared my collegiate experience overall, the community college experience was as good as at the 4-year I attended.

Although taking this course did not directly motivate Emlyn to be philanthropically engaged with ACC, it reinforced her belief that the quality of instruction at ACC was worth her financial support.

J attended ACC later in life to obtain knowledge on how to buy and sell real estate. He attended the college part time for 3 years. I asked J to tell me about his experience as a student at ACC. He shared:

After my career in the luggage industry finally ended after 33 years, I needed to learn about real estate law. I took all of the courses at ACC that I needed to obtain the education required for a real estate broker's license. I didn't get the license, but I just wanted the education. For 3 years, I took a class each semester. I didn't go during the summer. But I took the fall and spring semesters for 3 years in a row, took the six classes I needed to get my real estate broker's license education. My time as a student at ACC was great; I loved it.

Although he purposely did not take the test to obtain a real estate license, J did acquire the knowledge and expertise he desired from his time as a student at the college.

Jeb also attended ACC later in life. She and her husband were frequent travelers who often wondered about the history behind certain geological formations. They decided together to take a course in geology at ACC to provide them with a better understanding of the sites they were visiting. She said, "I had a fabulous time at ACC as an adult student. The teacher was great at communicating

and getting students to participate.” This experience, along with the development of a relationship with the ACC president, motivated Jeb to philanthropically support the college.

All seven participants who attended ACC had positive experiences that directly led to, or were motivating factors in, their decisions to philanthropically engage with the college. The four who did not attend ACC indicated they had similar positive experiences while students at other community colleges. Farmer took various science courses over 5 years at another community college. They said, “Most people think that it’s a waste of time. You’re spending 5 years at a 2-year college. Little did I know later on how valuable those experiences would be.” Although they did not discuss their time at community college in depth, Suzie, Savannah, and Sun also indicated they also had positive experiences while enrolled. Positive experiences as a student at the community college level was a prevalent theme during this study.

### ***Positive Experiences As an Employee***

Six of the study participants also had positive experiences while employed at ACC. D attended ACC directly out of high school and came back to the college after acquiring multiple degrees at a university. He greatly enjoyed his time working on campus and stayed at ACC for more than 30 years. He shared, “I loved the experience. People really make the place and ACC has a lot of great people. I had a lot of positive relationships with people.” Marlene also had a positive experience while working at the college. She said:

It was the first time I really had a job. It was in the library working at the front desk. I really like libraries. It was good because it was a small staff and at that time the library was very small, but you had a lot of traffic coming in and out. People either checking in books or just sitting and going through books. There was a lot of activity and people coming to the desk and I usually worked the front of the desk. You got to talk to a lot of people and make contact with people on a regular basis. I liked that.



I didn't have much contact with the library director, but I liked the full-time staff. They were very nice, and I think they liked me. It was a very small area; we were in pretty close contact. We really got along. It was a very positive experience.

Positive experiences as a student, while employed at ACC and her husband working at ACC as a librarian, were all motivating factors in Marlene deciding to philanthropically engage with the college later in life.

Archie and Savannah also enjoyed their time while employed at ACC. Archie worked at the college as a faculty member and administrator for 30+ years. He said, "In general, I had really good relationships with other staff, even if we didn't always agree." Savannah, a professor of biology for 15 years, had a similar experience. She said, "I enjoyed my time while employed at ACC." Both mentioned their first philanthropic contribution to ACC was motivated by positive experiences as an employee and the culture of giving among college employees. For Archie, he said, "the division created a scholarship to help support the children. Each of the faculty members made a donation each year. It ended up becoming endowed." Savannah also donated to the department she was part of. She said, "It was customary to give to the department." Supporting their departments eventually expanded to college-wide giving for Archie and Savannah.

Mike also discussed his positive experience as an employee at ACC. He described being hired full time at ACC after completing a campus internship and graduating with a master's degree in library science. He stated:

I did an internship at ACC prior to graduating my master's program. I was able to get to know the campus and was fortunate enough to be hired there. I was thrilled due to my great experiences as an intern. I had fallen in love with the atmosphere and the instructors. Working there has been wonderful on all levels, both with students, colleagues, and administration. What I've loved about ACC from the beginning is that the college is very supportive of student engagement. It's just a very positive place to work; I think in large part because of the tone that

the administration has set. It's just been an incredible place, in my mind, to work and be engaged with the students and our community.”

Mike indicated his positive experiences as an employee motivated him to philanthropically support ACC.

Farmer was the only participant to work at ACC who did not also attend the campus as a student. Although he did attend a different California community college, his experience at ACC was exclusively as an administrator. I asked Farmer why he chose to work at a community college and ACC in particular, and he said:

I really like community colleges; I like working with instructors and I like helping students. ACC is really focused on students; their achievements, how they fit into the community, how we help the industry; it's a really good place to be. They do so much for students. They give a lot of funds directly to students to help them out. I work with people who are really conscientious and open. You feel like everybody is giving back or helping sow the seeds for the future. I have had a wonderful time.

All participants who worked at ACC described their experience positively. Their experiences led them to be motivated to philanthropically support the college. For several, this support continued for 30+ years. Positive experiences as an employee and their role in motivating participants to philanthropically support campus was a theme of Research Question 1.

### **Theme 3: The Choice to Support Community College Students**

The third theme from Research Question 1 was participants deciding to philanthropically support community college students. This theme comprised the role community colleges play in society and the specific needs of community college students. Three study participants indicated the role of community colleges in society motivated them to support ACC. Savannah explained why she decided to support a community college institution, saying:

The mission of community colleges supports all sectors of society. Students who attend community colleges often have a tremendous financial need, and education is the gateway to realizing your potential. Without philanthropy, there is no education. It's that straightforward.

Sun discussed the societal role of community colleges, claiming:

Community colleges are the best deal in town. They are cheap, nurturing, and supportive. They allow students to mature, get skills, then transfer to a 4-year college. Teachers at community colleges are also focused less on research than those at 4-year universities.

Mike valued the quality of education at the community college, positing:

Community colleges are a way to significantly decrease the cost of going to college. I know from personal experience that the level of instruction is very high because of the instructors I had. They were really engaged in teaching. I can honestly say I have had some of the best educational experiences at community colleges. That's my personal take. I just love the way community colleges take care of students. I would not say I was not taken care of at the 4-years I attended, but I did feel like I received a different level of support as a student while enrolled at a community college.

Knowledge of the role of community colleges in society motivated these participants to philanthropically support ACC.

Two participants were motivated when they recognized the unique needs of community college students. Supporting community college students was important to Marlene. She said:

Every student has their own story, their own issues they're dealing with. A lot of them are working and just trying to make ends meet. So, they want to get a certificate and get a job, but they just need a little bit of money to get through school. But some of them want to transfer. I want to be able to address these student issues. I think philanthropy really does help with some of these issues they are facing.

College is so very, very expensive. I always encourage students to consider attending community colleges since they are more financially feasible; I think people are seeing that

more now in the last few years. Community colleges are less expensive, so the money goes farther in terms of tuition and books. It's almost like I feel I'm helping students even a little bit more. I also figure students at community colleges are focused on obtaining a degree or transferring so I feel my giving helps them get on their way.

Emlyn chose to philanthropically support ACC students:

The reality is we're in very tough financial times and education has taken a big hit. This impacts the opportunities that students have. The UC and CSU systems are too expensive. We're also in a very rapidly changing world. The necessity of offering curriculum that keeps up requires a vision, and there are visionaries at ACC, which is impressive. That has touched me because they are able to cut through or not get stuck on something minor.

Another fiscal reality is the cost to the student. If a student pursues higher education and comes out with a ton of student debt, it's a burden. If there's anything I can do to lessen the burden and offer these people the opportunity to pursue their dreams and achieve them, I'll do it, my goodness. The reality is that I feel philanthropy is how we can have an impact, a minor impact, but an impact nonetheless on the lives of students.

There is a quote from Ralph Waldo Emerson—"to know one life breathes easier because you have lived;" that's what I hope to achieve on a daily basis. It doesn't always happen, but if I can do that, or even just think about it, I feel like it's been a successful day.

Four participants indicated their philanthropic support addressed the specific needs of community college students. Savannah touched on this in her interview, saying:

Students who attend community colleges often have a tremendous financial need. But look at people who are suffering the most, minority populations, individuals in poverty or facing overcrowding; there is a lack of awareness on the impact philanthropy can have on individuals in these populations.

Sun talked about racial inequity in the workforce he employed. Due to this recognition, he created a program that provided mentorship to local high school students. He shared:

I noticed that there was a high dropout rate among minority students. I focused my philanthropy to help these populations, which led me to actively exclude some local schools that did not need the help. The goal of the program was to end the cycle of poverty. The only way to do this is through education and 4-year universities are not doing a good enough job. They need the community college's help.

Mike believed in supporting underrepresented students at ACC. He said:

I really want to help and support students at lower income levels, underrepresented students of race, color, and sexual orientation. I feel like community colleges are a good place to help students who fall into those categories. I feel like we can really support those students. The nice thing about ACC is that they are always encouraging faculty members to get involved in some way. I just wanted to be a part of the college and I also wanted to feel like I was making a difference here.

Suzie supported specific community college student populations including foster youth. She stated:

A majority of my donating dollars has gone to troubled children. For example, when I gave to ACC, the money was designated to go to the young people that were coming out of foster care. I want to help those that were not protected, so it's a long history of wanting to protect children and help others help children. The goal is to change the trajectory of even just one human being for the better. Every dollar is important, no matter how much. I believe God can use everything, whether it is time, energy, or money to help another human being.

Supporting community colleges and students in need was the third theme of Research Question 1.

## **Research Question 2**

Research Question 1 focused on motivations and experiences that initially led donors to philanthropically support ACC. Research Question 2 was designed to complement Research Question 1 by asking donors to describe their experience after being philanthropically engaged.

After coding and categorizing the data, I identified two main themes for Research Question 2. The first theme was participants had positive, impactful experiences after philanthropically engaging

with ACC. This theme included positive, impactful experiences on the college campus or individual students. The second theme from Research Question 2 was the desire to improve philanthropic practice. This theme included implementing criteria or measurable outcomes, increasing knowledge of how their support was used, making a larger impact with the resources they gave, and/or helping the ACC foundation grow.

### **Theme 1: Positive Experiences After Philanthropically Engaging**

Positive experiences after philanthropically engaging involved experiences with ACC as an institution and on individual students. These experiences led participants to feel satisfied and grateful for the opportunity to philanthropically support ACC.

#### ***Donors Had Positive Experiences by Engaging With the ACC Campus***

Six participants discussed their positive experiences after philanthropically engaging with ACC as an institution. I asked Jeb to explain her positive experiences. She said, "It's great being a small part of an institution that is really a necessity in any community. I get a lot of personal satisfaction out of giving. I know the funds are being used for the betterment of the school." I asked D the same question. They said, "It feels good to give back. Donating is something that makes me feel good." Farmer also talked about his experience after giving, saying:

The funding I give provides me a little influence that I can use to get a couple other people to pitch in and make a class available or to motivate an instructor to do something extra that's needed. What I'm doing is creating a revenue stream out of the place we as a college need to go.

Suzie had positive experiences with philanthropic support of ACC without recognition. She shared:

From a personal level, I have enjoyed being philanthropically involved on campus. My husband and I do not like name recognition. We are both very quiet. Many in the philanthropic community give to see things named after them or their photos in the paper. If you go to most performing arts centers, for example, you will see their name and photos. This just isn't our style. We don't want to take away from the problem being solved. Many charitable

organizations also have people there that want name recognition. The ACC Foundation Board isn't like that. We care deeply about what we are doing; we don't need the attention, listing, or photos.

Sun also had positive experiences but had a different perspective. They shared:

ACC has a great philanthropic environment. I get satisfaction from involvement with an institution that has talent. I have increased access to administration, staff, and students. I feel like I can talk to whomever. I've been really well received; I've become part of the ACC family.

Mike also experienced increased access after philanthropically engaging with ACC:

Giving has introduced me to a lot of people on campus that I wouldn't otherwise know. I think it also made me really aware of needs on campus. I think the philanthropic experiences lead to other experiences and I've learned about them by being engaged in that way. It's also been great to see other people get involved in scholarships and endowments I created. The more, the better. It felt great that anybody else was interested.

As a community member, foundation board member, and philanthropic supporter, Emlyn interacted with ACC in a variety of different roles. She stated:

I'm so grateful because absent my participation with opportunities that ACC has offered me, I would be a very different person. I'd still be able to do philanthropy, but this particular vehicle has offered more to me experientially and spiritually. It just has been very gratifying.

Each of these six participants indicated that their philanthropic support of ACC resulted in positive, impactful institutional experiences.

### ***Donors Had Positive Experiences by Supporting Students***

Other participants mentioned support of ACC students led to positive, impactful experiences. Mike discussed this in his interview. He said, "My real love while working with the honors program was to help students who, with a little help and support, could succeed. I felt like I was able to engage students at lower income levels and underrepresented students." Archie mentioned the good feeling

that comes with supporting students. He said, “I’m satisfied with what I give to the students; I want to feel good in the morning.”

Marlene was asked about her experience after philanthropically supporting ACC. She shared: Financial support really does help with some of the issues students are facing. Some have a family of their own, but they want to go to college and go on to a 4-year. They just need textbook money to help them out.

Marlene also discussed her participation in the end of the year scholarship banquet, saying: I get to meet the students, they get the scholarship, and then they always send me a thank you letter, which is really nice. So, that kind of allows me to know what the money is being used for and everything. I just don’t need a lot of attention.

Meeting with students and hearing their stories was a way for Marlene to know she was making a positive impact on students and allowed her to measure the success and validity of her philanthropic support.

Emlyn had a positive experience after directly giving to individual students. She talked about the impact of sponsoring a science-based writing competition that awarded the top three students with a monetary reward and the others with a consolation prize of a Luddite star. I asked Emlyn to tell me more about why this event stood out to her. She shared:

One of the fourth-place winners came up to me, a young woman. She said, “I’m speechless, I don’t know how to thank you.” This is somebody from a pretty rough background. She said, “I’ve never been recognized for anything.” So, this star was a symbol to her; it meant so much to her. Beyond what I could have imagined. The point is that you don’t always realize what effects your philanthropy has. The personal effects. But in that moment, when she was talking to me, I think I became more personally aware. I have her to thank for that.

Having a positive experience after philanthropically supporting ACC students was a key theme of Research Question 2.



## **Theme 2: Improving Philanthropic Practice**

Improving philanthropic practice involved the desire of multiple participants to implement criteria and measurable outcomes, become more knowledgeable on the effect of their philanthropic engagement, increase the overall impact of the resources they gave, and/or help the ACC Foundation grow. The theme was broken into two sections: becoming a more sophisticated giver and improving philanthropy at ACC.

### ***Becoming a More Sophisticated Giver***

J discussed how the foundation he was in charge of became increasingly sophisticated in recent years. The founder of the foundation, his father, supported many philanthropic charities but had not instituted any criteria or measurable outcomes. This made it hard to ascertain the impact of their grant giving. After his father passed, the responsibility to manage the foundation fell to J and other family members. J described how his foundation measured the impact and validity of the grants they awarded. He shared:

As I got more involved and learned more about who our grantees were, it became clear to me that we had to take a much more focused and professional approach to grant-giving. Simply writing a check and saying, “have a good year” and not having any checks or balances or one requirement for information really makes no sense.

There were no controls of any kind, no accountability of any kind. You have to ask questions. What are they doing? How does this grant application support their mission? What are their deliverables? What are their outcomes? How did they do based on their own metrics? We could not simply give away that level of money without outcomes. You just don’t do it without hoping to achieve success. I think it will take us 3 to 5 years to get really good at our grantmaking. We’re in the beginning of a year’s long effort to train ourselves and learn about our grantees.

Mike became a more sophisticated donor. He explained this desire and provided examples of how he thought he could achieve this goal:

It's been one of my biggest challenges; to be a better giver. To have the biggest positive impact with the limited resources I give. I don't have a lot of resources, but the resources I do give, I hope would have the greatest positive impact. Part of my goal has been to try and make the money go as far as I can, and the foundation office has given me an opportunity to do that. Matching seems like a great way to make money go farther, and I think it's a great way for the donor on my end who is maybe a lower-level donor to see their money double and make a bigger impact.

I also want to know more about the difference I am making in student's lives. If the foundation office was able to show the impact philanthropy makes, it would encourage other potential donors to financially contribute. It would be good for donors to know that what they are supporting is helping in the real world and makes a real difference in the lives of students.

For J and Mike, becoming more sophisticated donors enabled them to increase the impact of their philanthropic generosity.

### ***Improving Philanthropy at ACC***

Some participants were not interested in becoming more sophisticated donors. These individuals indicated they were satisfied with their current impact on campus and were not interested in becoming more engaged or implementing additional criteria or measurable outcomes. Although this result was surprising, all participants in this category were long-time donors. Marlene was not interested in becoming a more sophisticated donor:

I don't follow the students that I've given to, and they don't reach out other than the initial thank you letter they send me. I don't really feel the need. I just feel that students are going to use the money as they see fit because it's needed.

These participants had some ideas on how to improve the impact of philanthropy at ACC. Savannah provided recommendations on how the ACC Foundation could improve their fundraising efforts. She said, "More people need to be made aware that they too can be philanthropic, that

contributing minor sums can go towards a larger purpose. Even small contributions to a scholarship or endowment make a difference.” D had other ideas for improvement. They shared:

Many people graduate from ACC and I would find a way to get them involved. They have not had the experience of giving and the value of giving. If there is a way to encourage graduates to give back and increase the amount they give back over time, it would be really impactful. The more people who become involved, the more impactful it would be. Everything is impossible until we get started.

Archie also discussed how the ACC Foundation could make a bigger impact, saying:

It’s all about building trust. People wouldn’t stay in touch if they didn’t trust the president or other administrative leaders. If they didn’t act in a way that created trust. People have to believe you are not in it for yourself. You are in it to help. That you have the student’s best interests at heart. Trust can be destroyed in one action. Always be on the right side and do what you say you will do. Under promise and over deliver.

Suzie connected relationships with improvement of philanthropy at ACC. She stated:

Most philanthropic money is directed towards private schools—we don’t think of ACC or other government-supported schools as in need of our money. We think tuition is paid for and no extra help is needed. I personally think philanthropy is necessary to support these schools. They are on extremely tight budgets.

It’s important to develop relationships over the course of time. People’s interests change as do their motivations. Their motivations change, their financial status changes. Even if they can’t donate time, money, or energy now, they might be able to down the line or have connections to someone who does. Just because someone says no now doesn’t mean they will down the line. If you don’t ask, you don’t get.

I think as you go forward, it’s exciting to look around and see all of the young people. Even though they may not think or act exactly the same way, in order for an organization to

continue, you need to bring young people who have new ideas and energy to share. People with passion, concern, and new dynamics.

Although Marlene, Savannah, D, Archie, and Suzie were not interested in becoming more sophisticated donors themselves, they were interested in helping the ACC foundation make a larger impact.

### **Chapter Summary**

The focus of this chapter was to present key findings from Research Question 1 and Research Question 2. Research Question 1 was designed to discover the intrinsic motivations or experiences that led participants to philanthropically support ACC, and three themes were found for Research Question 1. Theme 1 was the role of community. This theme incorporated living in the geographic area surrounding ACC and/or involvement with the campus. Theme 2 was the impact positive experiences or relationship formation had on motivating participants to philanthropically engage. These experiences were primarily developed by attending or working at ACC. Theme 3 was the decision to consciously philanthropically support ACC instead of a 4-year university. This theme included the role of community college in higher education and/or the specific needs of students attending ACC.

Research Question 2 asked participants to describe their experience after philanthropically supporting ACC. Research Question 2 had two themes. Theme 1 was that donors had positive, impactful experiences after giving to ACC. This giving included ACC as an institution and ACC's individual students. Theme 2 was the desire of some participants to become more sophisticated philanthropists. This desire included implementing criteria or measurable outcomes, gaining increased knowledge of the impact of their giving, increasing the impact of the resources they gave to ACC, and helping the ACC Foundation become more successful. In Chapter 5, I interpret the themes of Research Question 1 and Research Question 2 and assess implications for policy, practice, and future research. Recommendations are presented.

## CHAPTER 5

### DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study was to explore intrinsic motivations and lived experiences that contributed to individuals philanthropically engaging with ACC. The study also sought to identify how donors described their experience after philanthropically engaging with ACC. Acquiring knowledge in these areas will help California community colleges create stronger relationships with donors. The study had two research questions.

1. What intrinsic motivations or lived experiences led donors to be philanthropically engaged with ACC?
2. How do donors describe their experience in being philanthropically engaged with ACC?

Purposive sampling was used, so I could focus on donors who had made a large financial impact on ACC. Participants (a) had cumulatively donated \$25,000 or more to ACC, (b) could meet online or over the phone for an interview, and (c) were willing to participate in the study. A total of 25 potential participants were contacted through mail and email with the help of ACC Foundation staff. A total of 11 agreed to participate and were interviewed on the phone or through Zoom.

In this chapter, I summarize, interpret, and provide implications for each theme of Research Question 1 and Research Question 2. I then provide three recommendations to improve philanthropic practice at the community college level. I conclude with a summary of the dissertation.

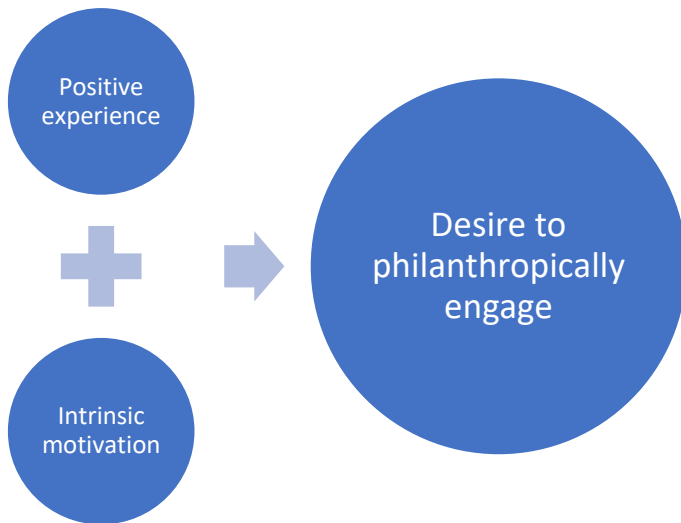
#### **Summary, Interpretation, and Implications of Study Findings**

In this section, I summarize, interpret, and provide implications for each theme of Research Question 1 and Research Question 2.

#### **Research Question 1 Findings**

Research Question 1 was designed to discover the intrinsic motivations and experiences that led donors to initially engage with ACC. After coding and categorizing the data, I identified three main themes concerning Research Question 1 (see Figure 3). The first was the role of community, which involved living in close geographical proximity and direct involvement with the ACC campus. The

second theme was the impact of positive experiences while enrolled, working, or participating on the foundation board. The final theme related to Research Question 1 was the conscious choice to philanthropically engage with a community college institution instead of a 4-year college or university.



*Figure 3. Role of Intrinsic Motivation and Past Experience in Donor Engagement*

### ***Theme 1: The Role of Community***

The first theme of Research Question 1 was close geographical proximity to the ACC campus created opportunities for all study participants to have meaningful connections with the college. These connections originated from attending ACC as a student, being employed at ACC, participating on the foundation board, living within a 15-mile radius of ACC, and/or becoming aware of ACC through its impact on the local community. For each participant, the creation of local, meaningful connections culminated in them deciding to philanthropically engage with the college. The impact of close geographical proximity on donor motivation was a key finding of this study.

Although critical, confirming the role of geographical proximity in donors choosing to philanthropically engage with a higher education institution was expected. Individuals are more likely to be aware of an institution if it is a part of the community they live in. Holmes (2009) found individuals are more receptive to philanthropically engaging with a local college than those who live farther away. This study supported this finding because 10 participants indicated living in the local community was a motivating factor in their decision to financially support ACC. The role close

geographical proximity played in donors deciding to philanthropically engage with ACC is a rationale for Recommendation 1: Increasing Outreach. This recommendation will be discussed later in the chapter.

Because ACC is the closest community college campus in distance to the majority of participants in this study, it was not surprising to learn many of them had attended, worked, and/or were foundation board members at the campus. Community colleges are large open-access institutions that serve students of all types (California State Department of Education, 1960; Cohen & Brawer, 2003). They offer diverse program offerings that are available to all members of a local community, which is an advantage community colleges have over 4-year institutions. The likelihood of attending, working, or knowing someone who has an affiliation is increased compared to an individual who resides outside the community. Living in close geographical proximity to the campus also provides community members with the opportunity to see and/or experience the educational impact of the institution.

**Implications of the Role of Community.** The impact of local geographical proximity on motivating donors to philanthropically engage has policy and practice implications for community college foundation staff, foundation board members, and any other individuals involved in fundraising efforts. Approaching potential donors who live close to campus needs to be emphasized, particularly those who have attended the institution, worked at the institution or developed a relationship with a campus employee or representative. These individuals have already interacted with the community college in some capacity and will be able to better understand the college's impact on the local community. This strategy, when combined with relationship building centered on trust, commitment, satisfaction, and mutual control, will increase the likelihood of a donor choosing to philanthropically support the campus (Hall, 2002; Wells, 2015).

More research needs to be done to discover how to best leverage the geographical proximity of a community college institution with local community members. This study only had one question specifically about geographical proximity. An entire qualitative study could easily be constructed to

collect data related to this theme. This hypothetical study could collect data on when participants first learned about the community college, whether they know anyone else who attended, their perception of the community college's impact, how visible the college is in the local community, or the impact of joining a foundation board. A quantitative or mixed methods study that provided an aggregate view of the impact of geographical proximity would also be useful to community college fundraisers who want to leverage the uniqueness and community impact of the campus they represent with local community members.

### ***Theme 2: Positive Experiences After Philanthropically Engaging***

The second theme from Research Question 1 was study participants had positive experiences in association with ACC. These experiences motivated participants to philanthropically engage with the college. The theme had two sections—the first was having positive experiences while attending ACC as a student. The second section of Theme 2 was having positive experiences as an employee or foundation board member at ACC.

**Positive Experiences as a Student.** The role of positive experiences in motivating donors to philanthropically engage was the second critical finding of this study, and for former students, supports existing scholarship on philanthropy in higher education. Monks (2003) found satisfaction with the undergraduate experience as the most significant predictor of philanthropic giving. Monks' study also found alumni who had been involved in campus activities, such as participating in sports, fraternities, sororities, or living in dormitories, had a higher probability of philanthropically engaging. Skari (2011) found alumni who maintain positive feelings from their time as students are more likely to give

My study and each of the studies cited previously connect positive student experience to later philanthropic giving (Monks, 2003; Skari, 2011). This connection is unsurprising because individuals who had a positive experience in the classroom or with a faculty member while attending ACC or another California community college likely want current students to have a similar opportunity. A key takeaway from this study is participants' ages while enrolled varied from attending a community



college directly out of high school to attending as a senior citizen to learn geographical knowledge. This finding shows the importance of cultivating students and alumni of all ages. Even if a student or alumni are not currently ready to philanthropically engage, they might be able to in the future or may know someone else who is a candidate to financially contribute to the college.

**Positive Experiences As an Employee or Board Member.** The literature on employee giving at community colleges is sparse and not directly applicable to findings of this study. Future research needs to be done to better understand the culture of giving that exists among current and former employees at these institutions. An example is the impact of payroll deduction, a philanthropic strategy that involves employees donating part of their earnings back to the college. Engaging in this practice can lead to larger financial contributions as employees grow older and see the impact of their philanthropy. Having more knowledge of employee-based philanthropic strategies will help in present and future fundraising efforts.

For participants in this study, their positive experiences while working at ACC provided them with an opportunity to directly observe the educational impact of the institution. These donors also had positive interactions with fellow employees. These experiences led to the realization their financial support could help students in need achieve academic success. Participants subsequently chose to support programs or scholarships where they felt an impact would be made. Almost all participants in this category indicated they preferred to support students in an academic subject area or student demographic they are affiliated or work with. Finding that employees prefer to philanthropically support students in the area they work in is a critical study finding and is a rationale for Recommendation 2: Create Transformative Gift Proposals. This recommendation will be discussed later in the chapter.

Several participants indicated a positive experience with ACC's president led them to join the foundation board and subsequently begin philanthropically supporting the campus. The involvement of ACC's president in fundraising supports other studies that found presidents involved in fundraising typically lead to increased rates of giving (Brittingham & Pezzullo, 1990; LaBeouf, 2003; Shuford,

2007). It also demonstrates how each theme of Research Question 1 is interrelated because it involves local community members developing a positive relationship with an employee at ACC, recognizing the need of students, and then deciding to philanthropically engage with the campus.

**Implications of Positive Experiences.** The impact of positive experiences on donor motivation has important implications on practice for individuals engaged in fundraising efforts and community college presidents. Efforts need to be made to track, engage, and cultivate relationships with former students and employees of the college. These individuals have hopefully had a positive experience and desire to create opportunities for current students to achieve success. This is particularly important for former students or employees who live in close geographical proximity to campus. College presidents also need to make themselves available on a case-by-case basis to engage with potential or current donors. Their involvement can lead to individuals contributing financial support for the first time or to existing donors increasing the amount they already give. Each of these could be achieved by leveraging interpersonal communications with an invitation to join the college's foundation board or other fundraising groups. These concepts will be discussed further in Recommendation 1: Improve Outreach and Recommendation 3: Increase Administrative Support.

More research needs to be done to learn how to best create connections between individuals who have had positive experiences and community college institutions. This qualitative study focused on 11 of the biggest donors at a single California community college. The targeted demographic only represents a small percentage of the overall donor base at ACC. Donors outside this group may have different motivations that led them to philanthropically engage. These donors also have likely not developed a relationship or had positive experiences with a college president or other high-level administrators. Future research needs to look at other populations in a donor base at a variety of different institutions, so fundraisers have improved knowledge on how to best cultivate relationships with a variety of different philanthropic individuals.

### ***Theme 3: The Choice to Support Community College Students***

The third theme of Research Question 1 was donors consciously chose to philanthropically engage with a community college campus. Participants indicated they were motivated by the educational mission of ACC, the needs of the students it serves, and the college's impact on the local community. This finding is important because the majority of philanthropic contributions to higher education are given to 4-year universities. Gallagher (2014) found only 4% of the money donated annually is directed to community colleges due to the role of these institutions in higher education (California State Department of Education, 1960; Cohen & Brawer, 2003) and the relative newness of their foundations (Angel & Gares, 1989; Babitz, 2003). Learning the reason behind donors choosing to philanthropically engage with ACC will help future fundraising efforts at other community colleges. It is the basis behind Recommendation 2: Create Transformative Proposals and Improve Donor Stewardship. This recommendation will be discussed later in the chapter.

It was unsurprising to find study participants were motivated by the educational mission of ACC, the needs of students who attend the college, and the impact the college has on the local community. Altruistic individuals typically want to support organizations they have a prior connection with and believe in (Scott & Seglow, 2007). All participants attended, worked, served on the foundation board, and/or live in close geographical proximity to ACC. These interactions and/or local proximity provided an opportunity for participants to observe the impact of the college on individual students and the community at large. ACC Foundation staff took these interactions and created relationships and gift proposals that encouraged current and/or potential donors to support the college. This practice is supported by past scholarship on higher education philanthropy such as Gallagher (2014) who advocated for learning what inspires individual donors and creating transformative gift proposals that align the beliefs and values of the institution and the local community to the donor.

**Implications of the Choice to Support Community College Students.** Findings of this study, in conjunction with other studies, have implications for policy and practice in community college

fundraising efforts. Community colleges need to leverage the unique role they play in higher education when approaching donors. These institutions make a significant impact on a wide range of students and the local community. This story, along with the financial need of students at the college, needs to be told so donors can better understand the impact their philanthropic contributions will make. Doing so will move away from the current transactional model of philanthropy and create transformative connections between donor and institution.

Future research needs to be conducted on why donors choose to support community colleges over 4-year universities. Studies on this topic are sparse, not focused on this specific topic, and look at higher education philanthropy as a whole. Although an important finding, this study did not contain any questions that specifically asked the reason behind donors making this decision. Future studies need to analyze why donors choose to financially support a community college instead of a 4-year university. Qualitative analysis of this phenomenon in different locales and with different target demographics in conjunction with comprehensive quantitative analysis will allow practitioners to create and use fundraising strategies that have a higher likelihood of successfully engaging donors.

### **Research Question 2 Findings**

Research Question 2 was designed to discover how donors felt after philanthropically engaging with ACC. After coding and categorizing the data, I identified two main themes concerning Research Question 2. The first was donors had positive experiences after philanthropically engaging. These experiences involved supporting ACC as an institution and making an impact on individual students. The second theme was the desire to improve philanthropic practice on an individual and/or institutional level.

#### ***Theme 1: Positive Experience after Philanthropically Engaging Campus***

The first theme of Research Question 2 was participants had positive, impactful experiences after philanthropically engaging with ACC. These experiences led participants to feel satisfied and/or grateful for the opportunity to philanthropically support ACC and led most to maintain or increase their financial contributions to the college. This result was expected because donors chose to support ACC

due to local geographical proximity, previous positive experiences, or the conscious choice to philanthropically engage with a community college campus. Regardless of the motivation, donors philanthropically engaged with ACC due to recognizing the impact of the campus and the needs of its students. It is unsurprising donors had positive, impactful experiences as a result of supporting these institutional efforts.

Although expected, this finding has few connections with existing research on higher education philanthropy. Most literature is focused on characteristics, motivating factors, or strategies that lead individuals to become philanthropically engaged. Future research needs to be conducted on donors' experiences after they philanthropically engage with an institution. Collecting data on donor satisfaction, preferred communication methods, stewardship strategies, and changes in giving over time at a variety of different community college institutions would improve current fundraising efforts.

**Implications of Having Positive Experiences After Giving.** Having positive feelings after giving has theoretical and practical implications for those engaged in fundraising efforts at community colleges. Altruism is defined as being selfless to promote the welfare of others. Altruistic individuals give without the expectation of receiving something tangible in return, although they may acquire benefits such as mental well-being, an ego boost, or an increase in societal standing. These benefits or others like them were mentioned by the majority of study participants. Fundraisers need to leverage this knowledge and approach donors with transformative proposals that lead donors to understand and be pleased they are making a significant impact on the lives of students. This concept will be discussed more in Recommendation 2: Create Transformative Proposals and Improve Donor Stewardship.

### ***Theme 2: Improving Philanthropic Practice***

Theme 2 of Research Question 2 was the majority of participants wanted to improve philanthropic practice. The theme was broken down into two different sections. The first was the desire of some participants to become more sophisticated donors. This included implementing criteria and/or measurable outcomes, becoming more knowledgeable on the effect of their philanthropic

engagement, and increasing the overall impact of the resources they give. Section 2 of Theme 2 was participants wanted to help improve fundraising efforts at ACC. Improving philanthropic practice on an individual and institutional level was the final finding of Research Question 2.

**Desire to Become a More Sophisticated Giver.** Discovering participants had the desire to become more sophisticated in their giving was not an expected finding. There is no current research that shows this link at the community college level. Although unexpected, the finding makes sense when a donor's personal characteristics, altruism, and transformative philanthropy is considered. On an individual level, donors who philanthropically engage with a higher education institution have likely achieved financial success to some degree in other aspects of their life. They likely also want to achieve success in their philanthropic giving. Their decision to altruistically support a community college demonstrates they believe in the organization, have a prior connection, and/or want to improve humanity (Scott & Seglow, 2007).

Implementing transformative philanthropic practices such as criteria, outcome review, and/or acquiring knowledge on the effect of their philanthropic engagement increases the likelihood of them being more personally invested in the success of the institution and the students being served. This prospect will be discussed further in Recommendation 2: Create Transformative Gift Proposals. It is important to note becoming a more sophisticated donor in no way entails a donor having the ability to control or fundamentally change institutional values or actions as a result of their giving. As in other higher education philanthropic interactions, this type of donor gift is designed to help the institution and students achieve success based on already existing values and beliefs.

**Desire to Improve Philanthropic Practice at the Community College Level.** Some participants also indicated they wanted to help improve philanthropic practice at the community college level because they believe the state government does not provide the level of funding needed to fully support institutional efforts. Discovering a desire to improve philanthropic practice was anticipated because, regardless of philanthropic model, donors are financially invested in the success of the college and students they support. Philanthropic research at the community college level has

shown fundraising efforts at these institutions lag behind 4-year institutions because philanthropy was historically seen as a nonessential task, which led to most community colleges not creating foundations until the 1980s (Angel & Gares, 1989; Babitz, 2003). Improving donor engagement strategies, such as implementing the three recommendations later in this study, would allow California community colleges to have higher fundraising totals and increase their ability to support current and future students. The desire of donors to see this shift occur is not surprising because these individuals are already investing their own time, energy, and financial resources into the success of the college.

**Implications of Wanting to Improve Philanthropic Practice.** Wanting to become a more sophisticated donor and improve philanthropic practice at the community college level has practical implications for individuals engaged in fundraising efforts at the community college level. Donors want to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of their philanthropic giving. This could be achieved by creating criteria and/or outcomes, acquiring knowledge of the effects of their giving, and/or making a larger overall impact with the resources they give. Efforts need to be made by community college staff to provide donors with the ability to understand how their generosity is transforming the lives of students. Improving donor stewardship efforts, creating transformative gift proposals, and providing opportunities to enlighten donors on how they can become more sophisticated philanthropists will increase the connection between donor and college. This idea will be discussed further in Recommendation 2: Create Transformative Proposals and Improve Donor Stewardship.

Future research needs to be done to assess how to best provide the knowledge necessary to create more sophisticated donors. This study only had one question that asked donors how they would improve philanthropic practice. A study that focused exclusively on this topic would help fundraising staff by providing preferred knowledge transfer strategies that could be used to educate donors. More research also needs to be done on the impact and best practices of donor stewardship. Because giving rates and expectations have generational differences, a study that looks across different demographic segments would be useful in creating individually tailored proposals and

outcome reports. Finally, research needs to be done on how to best collect and implement donor feedback. These individuals are financially invested in the success of the institution, so acquiring their knowledge and suggestions could help improve philanthropic practice at community college institutions.

### **Recommendations**

In this section, I focus on three recommendations to improve philanthropic policy and practice at community college institutions. Recommendation 1 is improving donor outreach. This recommendation includes reaching out to individuals who live in close geographical proximity, have had a positive experience and/or relationship with the college, and have a desire to make an impact on the lives of community college students. Recommendation 2 is creating transformative gift proposals and improving donor stewardship. This involves aligning the beliefs and values of a donor to an institution and showing the impact of a philanthropic gift on students. Recommendation 3 is increasing administrative involvement and support in fundraising activities. Increased engagement from administrators will help emphasize the impact of philanthropic revenue on student opportunity and success to current and/or potential donors.

#### **Improve Donor Outreach**

Reduction in state financial support has caused California community colleges to look to alternative revenue sources such as philanthropy. An important way for these institutions to increase fundraising effectiveness is by targeted donor outreach. Research on the topic has shown donors who live nearby (Holmes, 2009) and have positive feelings from their time as a student (Clotfelter, 2001; Monks, 2003) are more likely to be receptive to philanthropic engagement. This study agrees with each of these findings, as the majority of study participants were motivated to financially contribute to ACC because they live in close geographical proximity and had positive experiences while enrolled or working at the college. Community college fundraisers need to use these findings when selecting who they should philanthropically approach.



The first step in implementing targeted donor outreach is to keep detailed and up to date records of all former students, employees, and engaged community members in a constantly updated online database. Data on academic coursework, schools attended, and employment history provides critical data that are useful to gift proposal creation. Because donors are more likely to be involved and give as they get older (Carter, 2009; Clotfelter, 2001; Weerts & Ronca, 2007), keeping detailed records will have growing returns over time as individuals become financially secure and more open to philanthropically engaging. It is critical to keep in mind that potential donors who say no to an initial gift proposal may be more receptive to future philanthropic overtures as time passes. Keeping detailed records would allow a foundation to keep track of interactions and assist fundraisers in how to best approach potential donors in subsequent gift proposals.

A second step to improve donor outreach is by emphasizing those who live in close geographical proximity to campus. Potential donors are more likely to be aware of the impact of an institution if they live in the same community that the campus is located. They may also have connections with someone else who lives locally who knows about the college's impact and has the capacity and willingness to philanthropically engage. The final step is to focus on those who have had positive experiences or relationships while enrolled or working at the college. These individuals are more likely to want current community college students to have a similar, impactful experience. Following each of these three steps will help improve donor outreach and result in higher rates of engagement from current and potential donors.

### **Create Transformative Gift Proposals**

A second and more paradigm-changing way to improve philanthropic practice and policy at the community college level is by implementing transformative gift proposals and better demonstrating the impact donor's financial contributions have on students. Transformative philanthropy includes communication, proposals, and/or strategies that directly align the beliefs, values, and mission of the institution with those of the donor. This type of philanthropy often results in a closer partnership between organization and donor along with increased engagement and giving. Findings of this study

support the impact of transformative philanthropy, because participants indicated their positive experiences while enrolled and/or working at ACC along with their desire to make a difference in the lives of community college students motivated them to philanthropically engage. Creating transformative gift proposals and showing the impact of donations through improved donor stewardship will result in higher rates of donor engagement and satisfaction at the community college level.

Recommendation 2 builds on Recommendation 1 because the first step is to identify individuals who live in close geographical proximity and/or had positive experiences while enrolled and/or working at the community college. A potential or current donor who lives nearby and/or has had positive experiences is more likely to understand the impact of the college. Once identified, Step 2 is for individuals engaged in fundraising efforts to create a gift proposal that provides a donor with an opportunity to support a student need that is particularly meaningful to them. This type of proposal needs to go beyond general scholarship support by targeting groups of students (e.g., homeless, food insecure, veterans) who need financial support to achieve their academic goals. Faculty and other campus employees should be included in proposals to ensure mission alignment and to better convey the need behind the gift proposal.

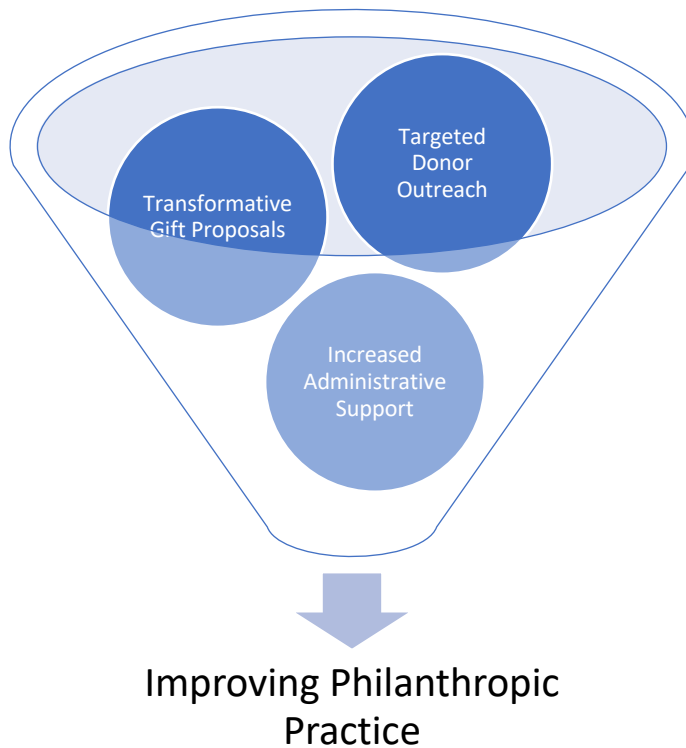
The final step in Recommendation 2 is to provide donors with consistent evidence of the impact their philanthropic gifts make on students through improved donor stewardship practices. This can be done through student or faculty testimonials, annual reports, or quantitative data. Regardless of the communication method, the goal is to inform donors of the impact they are making on students' lives. Combining transformative gift proposals with improved stewardship communication will increase donor satisfaction and result in increased philanthropic engagement from current and potential donors.

### **Increase Administrator Involvement and Support**

The third recommendation to improve philanthropic practice and policy at the community college level is to increase administrative involvement and support in fundraising efforts. Research

has shown there is a positive connection between money and time spent on fundraising and money raised (Baade & Sundberg, 1996; Harrison, 1995; Liu, 2006) and having an involved and supportive president leads to increased rates of alumni giving (Brittingham & Pezzullo, 1990; LaBeouf, 2003; Shuford, 2007). Multiple participants in this study indicated they became philanthropically engaged after being approached by ACC's president and foundation director. These participants are some of ACC's most generous donors and have also been involved in recruiting other donors. Their stories, in conjunction with past research, demonstrates the impact of engaged administrative-level personnel on fundraising efforts. Community colleges need to add fundraising to the responsibilities of vice presidents, deans, and other high-level administrators. Although this additional responsibility would divert attention from other important administrative areas, the time commitment would be minimal, infrequent, and would have the potential to make a large fiscal impact on the campus. Adding this responsibility would also create a more sophisticated culture of giving and help community colleges mirror philanthropic practice at 4-year institutions.

The first step to increase administrative involvement is for fundraisers to collect data that support the need for them to be involved. This data could be qualitative, such as findings of this study, and/or quantitative. Foundation office staff then need to meet with administrators and make a compelling argument for why they need to increase their fundraising involvement and/or support. Increasing the financial resources available to foundation staff and being willing to attend community events, donor events, and talk individually with donors will improve the reach and success of philanthropic efforts and lead to an increase in the number of transformative philanthropic interactions. Combining increased administrative support with targeted donor outreach, transformative gift proposals, and improved stewardship communication will increase the financial impact of fundraising at the community college level (see Figure 4).



*Figure 4.* Recommendations for Improving Philanthropic Practice

### **Summary of the Dissertation**

Declining state financial support and the subsequent lack of alternative revenue streams for California community colleges threatens the ability of these institutions to offer low cost, innovative, and quality education. One way to raise additional funds is by developing and cultivating relationships with philanthropic individuals. For this to happen, institutions need to acquire knowledge on the role motivation and experience play before and after donors philanthropically engage with a California community college. The purpose of this qualitative, phenomenological study was to explore intrinsic motivations and lived experiences that contributed to individuals philanthropically engaging at ACC.

Research Question 1 was designed to discover the intrinsic motivations and experiences that led donors to initially engage with ACC. After coding and categorizing the data, I identified three main themes. The first theme was the role of community, which involved donors living within close geographical proximity to the ACC campus. Although important, this finding was unsurprising because philanthropic individuals are more likely to know about a campus if they live in the same community as the institution. The second theme of Research Question 1 was the impact of positive

experiences and/or relationships. Like Theme 1, this finding was not surprising because it is more likely for donors to want to philanthropically support a campus if they have had a positive experience, whether as a student, employee, or community citizen. The third theme of Research Question 1 was the deliberate choice to support a community college instead of a 4-year college or university. This theme is more directly relevant to community colleges because it shows the unique, community-based mission of community colleges, and the needs of the students these institutions serve can be leveraged to encourage individuals to philanthropically engage.

Research Question 2 complemented Research Question 1 by asking donors to describe their experience after being philanthropically engaged. After coding and categorizing the data, I identified two main themes. The first theme was that study participants overwhelmingly had positive, impactful experiences after philanthropically engaging with ACC. These experiences included satisfaction with helping the entire institution and/or with helping individual students. The second theme of Research Question 2 was the desire to improve philanthropic practice. This included the desire to become more sophisticated at giving and improving philanthropy practice at ACC itself. Both themes of Research Question 2 were critical findings that have strong implications for how California community colleges should engage and cultivate their existing donor bases.

Collecting, analyzing, and interpreting study data led me to make three recommendations to improve philanthropic practice at the community college level. The first recommendation is community colleges need to focus on reaching out to local community members who have had a positive experience and/or relationship with the institution and have a desire to make an impact on the lives of students. The second recommendation is community colleges need to create transformative proposals that align the beliefs and values of a donor to an institution. They also need to improve donor stewardship practices and definitively show the transformative impact a philanthropic gift has on individual students.

My final recommendation is for community colleges to increase the role of high-level administrators in philanthropic fundraising. Research has shown an involved college president results

in increased rates of alumni giving (Brittingham & Pezzullo, 1990; LaBeouf, 2003; Shuford, 2007). Involving the college president and other high-level administrators will help community colleges emphasize to donors the impact of philanthropic revenue on student opportunity and success. Each of these recommendations, in conjunction with existing philanthropic practice, will help California community colleges increase their philanthropic revenue.

**APPENDIX A****RESEARCH STUDY LETTER OF INVITATION**

**Study Title:** An Analysis of Donor Motivation at a California Community College

**Researcher:** Karl E. Freels, College of Education, EdD Candidate, (XXX) XXX-XXXX

Dear ACC Donor:

My name is Karl Freels and I am a graduate student in the California State University, Fullerton (CSUF) Doctorate in Community College Educational Leadership Program. I am conducting a research study to explore how experience and motivation impact donor giving. This study is significant to higher education because acquiring knowledge regarding donor experience and motivation will assist California community colleges in implementing fundraising strategies that result in stronger relationships with current and future philanthropic individuals.

Prospective participants must meet the following criteria: (a) Have cumulatively donated \$25,000 to ACC; b) Have a valid mail or email address registered with ACC c) Can meet online via zoom or over the phone for an interview, and d) Are willing to participate in the study. Your name was provided to me by the ACC Foundation as a donor who meets the aforementioned criteria.

If you decide to take part in the study, you will be asked to participate in a face-to-face, 60- to 90-minute interview that will be audio-recorded with your permission. Interview questions will focus on how experience and motivation affect donor giving to ACC. During the interview, you will not be expected to answer questions that make you uncomfortable. If you choose not to answer, there will be no consequence and you will have the option to remain or leave the study.

Participation in this study is voluntary and you may choose to withdraw at any time. The data for this study will be kept confidential to the extent allowed by law. I will use a pseudonym (alias) in place of your name in the documents associated with this study. No published results will identify you, and your name will not be associated with the findings. All data for this study, including audio recordings, will be kept on a password-protected computer. I am the only person who will have access to the study data.

If you are interested in participating in this study or have any questions, please contact me via email at xxxxx@csu.fullerton.edu or call/text me at (xxx) xxx-xxxx.

Thank you,  
Karl E. Freels, MA  
EdD Candidate

## APPENDIX B

### INFORMED CONSENT FORM

**Study Title:** An Analysis of Donor Motivation at a California Community College

**HSR#:** HSR#18-19-729

**Researcher:** Karl E. Freels, College of Education, Educational Leadership Department, (XXX) XXX-XXXX, xxxxx@csu.fullerton.edu

You are being asked to take part in a research study carried out by Karl Freels, a graduate student in the California State University, Fullerton (CSUF) Doctorate in Community College Educational Leadership Program. This study is being conducted under the advisement of Dr. David Forgues. This consent form explains the research study and your part in it if you decide to join the study. Please read the form carefully, taking as much time as you need. Ask me to explain anything you don't understand. You can decide not to join the study. If you join the study, you can change your mind later or quit at any time. There will be no penalty or loss of services or benefits if you decide to not take part in the study or quit later.

#### **What is this study about?**

This research study is being conducted to investigate social, financial, and educational experiences and/or motivations that contribute to individuals donating to ACC. Prospective participants must meet the following criteria: (a) Have cumulatively donated \$25,000 to ACC; b) Have a valid mail or email address registered with ACC c) Can meet online via zoom or over the phone for an interview, and d) Are willing to participate in the study. Your name was provided to me by the ACC Foundation as a donor who meets the aforementioned criteria.

#### **What will I be asked to do if I am in this study?**

If you take part in the study, you will be asked to review and sign this consent form, and then participate in a 60- to 90-minute online interview that will be audio recorded with your permission. Interview questions will be focused on your experience both before and after your decision to donate to [Name of Campus]. You will be asked to share your perspective on how these social, financial, or educational experiences and/or motivations have impacted your philanthropic activities. You may also be asked to participate in a 15-minute online follow-up interview. During both interviews, you do not have to answer any questions that make you uncomfortable. If you choose not to answer, there will be no consequence and you will have the option of remaining or leaving the study.

#### **Are there any benefits to me if I am in this study?**

There is no direct benefit to you from being in this study, but your participation will contribute to knowledge and understanding of donor motivation and this may help others fundraise and research philanthropic engagement in the future.

#### **Are there any risks to me if I am in this study?**

There is no more than minimal risk for participation in this study. The protocol contains no foreseeable risks. You may choose not to answer any question that makes you uncomfortable. The number of Doug Bennett, Executive Director of ACC's Foundation, will be provided in case you have concerns or questions about participation in the study.

#### **Will my information be kept anonymous or confidential?**

The data for this study will be kept confidential to the extent allowed by law. I will use a pseudonym (alias) in place of your name and [Name of College] in the documents associated with this study. No published results will identify you, and your name will not be associated with the findings.

The data for this study, including audio recordings, will be kept on a password-protected computer. I am the only person who will have access to the study data.

The results of this study may be published or presented at professional meetings, but the identities of all research participants and the school will remain confidential.



The data for this study will be kept indefinitely, for future educational use, presentations, and publications. Data will be kept to ensure the accuracy of future analysis.

**Are there any costs or payments for being in this study?**

There will be no costs to you for taking part in this study. You will not receive money or any other form of incentive for taking part in this study.

**Who can I talk to if I have questions?**

If you have questions about this study or the information in this form, please contact me, Karl E. Freels at xxxxx@csu.fullerton.edu. If you have questions about your rights as a research participant or would like to report a concern or complaint about this study, please contact the Institutional Review Board at (657) 278-7640 or e-mail irb@fullerton.edu.

**What are my rights as a research study volunteer?**

Your participation in this research study is completely voluntary. You may choose not to be a part of this study. There will be no penalty to you if you choose not to take part. You may choose not to answer specific questions or to stop participating at any time.

**What does my signature on this consent form mean?**

Your signature on this form means:

- You understand the information given to you in this form
- You have been able to ask the researcher questions and state any concerns
- The researcher has responded to your questions and concerns
- You believe you understand the research study and the potential benefits and risks involved

**Statement of Consent**

I have carefully read and/or I have had the terms used in this consent form and their significance explained to me. By signing below, I agree that I am at least 18 years of age and agree to participate in this project. I have been given a copy of this signed and dated consent form to keep.

Name of Participant (please print) \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of Participant \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of Investigator \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

***Your signature below indicates that you are giving permission to audio record your responses.***

Signature of Participant \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

## APPENDIX C

### INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

#### Before Interview

- Email participant with a copy of informed consent form (see Appendix C) before the interview taking place. Ask the participant to closely review, sign, and return consent before the day of the interview. If the participant does not return the informed consent form before interview time, ask them to do so before starting interview protocol.
- Ensure technological devices such as computers, the internet, and recording devices are properly functioning.
- Print out a hard copy of the interview protocol and have a word document ready for note-taking.
- Create extemporaneous notes 1 hour before the interview – Discuss setting, emotional state, expectations, etc. from the perspective of the researcher. Document any technological issues and if the participant provided an informed consent form.
- Log onto zoom or be ready with phone 15 minutes before interview start time.
- When the participant logs on to zoom or answers the phone, greet and began building rapport. Discuss topics such as work, school, shared acquaintances, society, etc.
- Provide participants with a brief, general overview of the researcher’s background and role in the study.
- Provide the participant with the background and overall goal of the study. Briefly touch on what is being studied, why, and the importance of collecting this type of data.
- Ensure that the participant has signed and returned a copy of the informed consent form (see Appendix C). Explain that the participant is under no obligation to participate and can leave the study at any time without consequence.
- Explicitly ask the participant if they are still willing to participate in the research study. If the participant replies that they are, ask them to select a pseudonym. Advise them that this will be how they will be identified in any study materials and that this is a way of providing them and the school with confidentiality. Let them know that the name will be changed if a different study participant has the same name as the pseudonym that is chosen.
- Ask participants if they are ready to proceed with the interview and if it is ok to turn on the recording devices. If they respond with yes, then move on to the “during interview” portion of the interview protocol.

#### During Interview

- Turn on the recording feature on both zoom and QuickTime player software.
- Verbally state the time, date, and location of the interview. State whether the interview is taking place online or on the phone.
- Verbally state the name of the researcher, participant, and any other people who are present.
- Verbally confirm with the participant that they have read, understood, and have freely agreed to sign the informed consent form.
- Remind the participant that they do not need to answer any question that makes them uncomfortable and that they have the right to leave the study at any time without consequence.
- Ask the participant if they are ready to begin the interview. If they respond with yes, the researcher should begin with the first interview question in the interview protocol.



Research Question:	Interview Questions:
What intrinsic motivations or lived experiences led existing donors to be philanthropically involved with ACC?	<p><b>1. Have you ever attended ACC?</b></p> <p>a. If the participant answers yes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What led you to attend ACC? Explain.</li> <li>• What was your educational goal?               <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Why did you make that degree/certificate choice? Explain.</li> </ol> </li> <li>• How active were you as a student?</li> </ul>

1. Did you join any clubs, sports teams, or participate in student governance?
  - a. What were they?
  - b. What was that experience like? Explain.
- How would you describe your interaction with faculty, staff, and students during your time as a student?
  1. Do any experiences, in particular, stand out?
    - a. How did this experience make you feel/affect you? Explain.
- Did you attain a degree or certificate?
  1. If the participant answers yes:
    - a. What degree and/or certificate was it?
    - b. How did this achievement make you feel? Explain.
  2. If the participant answers no:
    - a. Next Question.
- Has anyone else in your family attended ACC?
  1. If the participant answers yes:
    - a. When did they attend ACC?
    - b. What was their educational goal?
    - c. Did they attain a degree or certificate?
    - d. How did you feel about them attending ACC?
  2. If the participant answers no:
    - a. Next Question.
    - b. If participant answers no:
- Have you attended other higher education institutions?
  1. If the participant answers yes:
    - a. Where at?
    - b. What was your educational goal?
    - c. How would you describe your educational experience?
  2. If the participant answers no:
    - a. Next Question.

**2. Have you ever worked at ACC?**

- a. If the participant answers yes:
  - What was your position?
  - When did you start?
    1. How long have/did you work at ACC?
  - How would you describe your experience working at Ace Community? Explain.
  - How would you describe your interactions with administration, faculty, and students? Explain.
  - Has anyone else in your family attended ACC?
    1. If participant answers yes:
      - a. When did they attend ACC?
      - b. What was their educational goal?
      - c. Did they attain a degree or certificate?
      - d. How did you feel about them attending ACC?
    2. If the participant answers no:
      - a. Next Question.
      - b. If the participant answers no:
- Next Question.

**3. If the participant answers that they have not attended or worked at ACC:**

1. When and how did you learn about ACC? Specifically, what about ACC caught your attention? Explain.

- How did you initially become involved with Ace University College?
  1. What was the impetus behind this interaction? Explain.
- Has anyone else in your family attended Ace University College?
  1. If the participant answers yes:
    - a. When did they attend ACC?
    - b. What was their educational goal?
    - c. Did they attain a degree or certificate?
    - d. How did you feel about them attending ACC?
  2. If the participant answers no:
    - a. Next Question.

**4. Did ACC approach you about being philanthropically involved or did you approach the college on your own?**

- If the participant answers Ace Community:
  1. How long ago did this happen?
  2. In what way did ACC approach you?
  3. What was your initial reaction to being approached? Please describe.
  4. Did you immediately become philanthropically engaged or did it take time?
    - a. If the participant answers immediately:
      - i. Why did you choose to become philanthropically involved immediately?
    - b. If the participant answers that it took time:
      - i. Why did you choose to not become philanthropically involved immediately?
      - ii. How long did it take for you to change your mind?
        1. What caused you to change your mind?
- If the participant answers on their own:
  1. How long ago did this happen?
  2. What led you to reach out to ACC? Explain.
  3. How did you reach out?
  4. What was the response you received?
    - a. How did this make you feel?

**5. Have you been philanthropically engaged with other higher education institutions or charitable organizations?**

- a. If the participant answers yes:
  - What other higher education institutions or charitable organizations have you donated to?
  - What brought you to decide to donate to these institutions and/or charitable organizations? Explain.
  - Why did you decide to philanthropically engage with a community college campus (i.e., ACC)?
  - Was ACC the first higher education institution you philanthropically engaged with? Please describe.
- b. If the participant answers no:
  - Is there a specific reason why you have only philanthropically engaged with ACC?
  - Do you have an interest in supporting other charitable organizations? Why or why not?

**6. What is your proximity to ACC?**

**7. Are there specific social, political, or communal issues that led you to be philanthropically engaged with ACC?**

	<p>a. If the participant answers yes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What are some examples?</li> <li>• Why did they cause you to want to be philanthropically engaged with ACC? Please explain.</li> <li>• Do you feel your philanthropic engagement and philanthropy as a whole have the potential to make a difference in these issues? Why or why not?</li> </ul> <p>b. If the participant answers no:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What experiences or motivations led you to philanthropically engage with ACC? Please describe some specific examples.</li> </ul> <p><b>8. Are there any other motivating factors or experiences that led you to philanthropically engage with ACC that you would like to mention?</b></p> <p>a. If the participant answers yes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What are some examples?</li> <li>• What about this (factor, experience, etc.) motivated you to philanthropically engage with ACC? Please explain.</li> </ul> <p>b. If the participant answers no:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Next Question.</li> </ul>
<p>How do donors describe their experience in being philanthropically engaged with ACC?</p>	<p><b>9. How would you describe the experience of being philanthropically engaged with ACC?</b></p> <p>a. What has stood out the most to you? Why? Please explain.</p> <p>b. Is there anything else you would like to mention about the experience of being philanthropically engaged with ACC?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• If the participant answers yes:       <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Can you tell me more about the experience?</li> </ol> </li> <li>• If the participant answers no:       <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Next Question.</li> </ol> </li> </ul> <p><b>10. Has your overall role and involvement (other than donating) changed since you became philanthropically engaged with ACC?</b></p> <p>a. If the participant answers yes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How has it changed? Can you be specific?</li> <li>• How has that change made you feel?</li> </ul> <p>b. If the participant answers no:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Is this by choice? Please explain.</li> </ul> <p><b>11. How do you measure the overall success and validity of your philanthropic gifts?</b></p> <p>a. Do you have criteria or measurable outcomes? Please explain.</p> <p>b. How long have you been giving?</p> <p>c. Has your giving increased over time? Please explain.</p> <p><b>12. What are your overall feelings or thoughts on the philanthropic process concerning philanthropy and higher education (specifically community colleges)?</b></p> <p>a. Are there any positive or negative aspects you would change?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• If the participant answers yes:       <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. What are some examples? Please be specific.</li> <li>2. What in particular makes you feel (positive or negative) about (provided example)?</li> </ol> </li> <li>• If the participant answers no:       <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Next question.</li> </ol> </li> </ul> <p>b. Are there things you would change about the philanthropic process?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• If the participant answers yes:</li> </ul>

	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. What are some examples?</li> <li>2. What impact do you think these changes would make?</li> <li>3. How would you go about making these changes?</li> </ol> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• If the participant answers no: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. What is the most appealing part of the philanthropic process to you? Please explain.</li> </ol> </li> </ul> <p><b>13. Has the coronavirus pandemic changed your mind concerning philanthropy? If so, how?</b></p> <p><b>14. Is there anything else you would like to discuss before the interview ends?</b></p>
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#### After the interview

- Turn off the recording feature on Zoom and/or QuickTime Player.
- Thank participant for participating in the interview.
- Ask if it is ok to have subsequent contact if the researcher has follow-up questions, information needs to be clarified, or to perform member checking.
- Advise participants to contact the researcher if they have any questions, concerns, or think of additional information. Remind them that the researcher can be contacted via email or phone. This information is available on their copy of the informed consent form (See Appendix C).
- Ask if the participant has any further questions for the researcher.
- End interview by expressing appreciation toward participant for participating. Tell them to have a good day and goodbye.
- End Zoom meeting or telephone call.
- Create extemporaneous notes immediately following the interview that details the researcher's experience during the interview process. Focus on details not readily available in audio recordings (i.e., body posture, facial expressions, personal thoughts).

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