This investigation used a qualitative multiple case study to explore emergent collaborations between community colleges and private foundations, specifically from the vantage point of individuals leading these organizations. Namely, this study sought to explore Lumina Foundation’s Achieving the Dream (AtD): Community Colleges Count initiative to better understand how these collaborations unfolded—what happened before the project’s launch, during the project’s period, and after the projects ended. The 2017-18 Baldrige Education Framework guided this research study (“National Institute of Standards and Technology,” n.d.). A total of 18 research participants from two community colleges, Lumina Foundation, and Achieving the Dream organization recalled how their collaborative work unfolded. Results of this study found emergent college-foundation collaborations resembled “business-like” transactions with prescriptive ways to improve student achievement outcomes, expend finite resources in a fiscally responsible manner, expand stakeholder involvement and create data-directed decisions. This investigation sheds light on the motivations, experiences, and outcomes from the collaborative work between college leaders and foundation officials. This study describes implications for policy to include financial and non-financial support from state legislatures, future research to involve investigating similar collaborations across different regions of the nation, and practice focusing on the kinds of leadership and management decisions that might enhance such collaborations.

Roosevelt Charles is the Director of Student Support and TRIO Programs for Prince George’s Community College. He holds a B.S. in Education and M.S. in Public Administration.