Nicole Rodriguez
The Sillerman Center

During the summer of 2013, I was a graduate intern for GMA Foundations, which provides evaluation consulting to over 40 foundation clients. GMA offers grantmakers an array of services, from strategic consulting and impact analysis, to grantmaking, and administration and organizational support. During my tenure, I worked with the Sociological Initiatives Foundation, the Miller Foundation and the Anna B. Stearns Charitable Foundation.

Most of my work has focused on the Sociological Initiatives Foundation (SIF), which funds community-based participatory research. SIF is dedicated to the belief that community-based action plays a critical part to the research process. This relationship creates a powerful paradigm to collaboratively examine, study and take action to address social issues. I had the task of conducting an impact analysis of all the foundation's grants. The purpose of my analysis is threefold: (1) assess results achieved and lessons learned through past grant making activities; (2) illuminate the foundation's role in shaping research and social action; (3) inform the development of future strategies – both for SIF and for those other players working to successfully link research with social action, thereby strengthening community organizations and influencing public policy.

Additionally, my work with the Anna B. Stearns Charitable Foundation and the Miller Foundation found me conducting more traditional foundation work. Specifically, I was responsible for evaluation write-ups and assessing recommendations, proposal reviews, site visits and meetings with grantees.

This experience has allowed me to understand and value the vital role foundations play in public policy. My experiences with grantee social justice organizations in the

Boston area has shown me that philanthropy has a powerful ability to elevate important policy issues onto the public agenda. Most importantly, this experience has shown me that philanthropy innovates, demonstrates, fosters and fills in the knowledge gap to inform better local and national government policies and programs. I will take this knowledge and appreciation throughout my career in public policy.