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### Sillerman Fellowship Reflection

Before this summer, I had little exposure to philanthropy and even less knowledge about how an internship in philanthropy could relate to, or complement, my MPP degree. By the end of my fellowship at the Boston Foundation (completed online due to COVID-19), I gained invaluable insight into the roles philanthropy can play in the fight for social justice beyond simply funding mission-aligned nonprofits. Now, I understand that philanthropy can operate on the cutting edge of social issues, funding pilot programs that later become the basis for future policy decisions. It can also catalyze community-building by facilitating resource-sharing and convening partners to move the collective needle on pressing issues.

This summer, I provided general program support to my colleagues on the Education & Health team at TBF. The team was unusually short-staffed when I joined, which gave me a unique opportunity to jump in and do “real” work from day one. Additionally, I helped with two larger projects revolving around Success Boston, the Boston Foundation’s longstanding college completion initiative and cross-sector partnership among the Boston Public Schools, Boston-area non-profits and higher education institutions, and the Boston Private Industry Council. One project was to help program and facilitate a three-day virtual convening (the Success Boston Summer Institute), a gathering of college access coaches and community partners for professional development and panel discussions on a variety of topics. Our theme for this year’s Summer Institute was “Equity in Advising,” so I reached out to Greater Boston PFLAG to recruit them for a training on supporting LGBTQ+ students. I also facilitated a panel of seasoned Success Boston coaches to share advice and best practices for new coaches. We heard positive feedback from coaches about being able to connect with and learn from their peers at the event, which was especially beneficial given the isolating nature of COVID-19 and the challenges of

shifting to hybrid advising this fall. The Summer Institute demonstrated to me how philanthropy can powerfully convene individuals and organizations working toward a common goal – in this case, supporting students – to exchange resources and uplift one another.

My second large project was to write a new strategic plan/informational packet about Success Boston. This included a series of short pieces on Success Boston's history, governance structure, partnerships, and plans for the future. For this, I synthesized information from prior strategic plans, external evaluations of Success Boston, data from Salesforce (Success Boston's database for information on student participation and coaching partners), and interviews with my supervisor and our team leader, who has been with Success Boston since its origin. The final document was approximately 10 pages. When I completed my internship, the plan was to share it with members of the Success Boston strategic planning team – a group of educational and city leaders charged with implementing Success Boston's strategies – to review it. During my time as an intern, this group debated what the future of Success Boston should look like and how its role in the Greater Boston educational sphere should evolve. These discussions helped me understand that various stakeholders will likely have strong, sometimes differing opinions on how to best address the injustices facing our institutions and students. Being less directly involved, philanthropic leadership can play a mediating role in these discussions – a position that comes with both benefits and drawbacks.

These were just two of many projects I worked on this summer, including supporting a community college STEM internship convening among Massachusetts community college leaders. I am so grateful to the Sillerman Center and my colleagues at TBF for the opportunity to delve into diverse topics in philanthropy, deepen my knowledge of Boston's higher education landscape, and gain insights that I will carry with me into my policy career and beyond.