

Sillerman Fellowship Reflection | **The Philanthropic Initiative**
Summer 2023
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I am immensely grateful to have spent my summer working with The Philanthropic Initiative (TPI). As a full-time MBA student, I worked part-time with TPI for 10-12 hours a week over the summer. TPI is a nonprofit that provides strategic advisory council and consulting to various stakeholders in the field of philanthropy, including foundations, corporations, families, and more. More than that, TPI is comprised of a team of passionate professionals who are dedicated to supporting others with how to make the greatest impact they can with their dollars.

I worked on various projects this summer, including: Drafting RFPs and summaries of submitted proposals, attending a strategic planning committee meeting with a community foundation, and researching prospective grantees for funders based on their areas of focus and interests. One of my favorite projects involved developing an alumni survey for TPI's college success programs, researching key statistics related to first-generation college students from low-income backgrounds for benchmarking purposes, and aligning my findings with a larger initiative to measure the broader impact of the college success programs. All in all, the projects I worked on allowed me to have breadth in that I worked on various initiatives, but they also allowed me to have depth as well. The balance between those two things was easily the most rewarding aspect of my time at TPI this summer – and another reason why I highly recommend TPI to prospective fellows in the future!

Here are a few additional key learnings and takeaways from working with TPI this summer:

Building Through-Sector Relationships:

Working at TPI has taught me the importance of building through-sector relationships between funders, grantees, and philanthropic consultants, like the staff at TPI. There are also relationships with high schools and colleges, given TPI's various college success programs. I witnessed how TPI staff intentionally built trust and open communication through their interactions with grantors and grantees and

their strong ability to act as an intermediary in the philanthropic sector. This also highlighted the importance of cross-collaboration to combat and dismantle traditional power structures in the field.

Taking an Equity-Centered Approach to Philanthropy:

Every philanthropic initiative is unique – there is no cookie-cutter model to giving. TPI emphasizes the significance of tailoring strategies to funders' individual needs, goals, and values. They intentionally meet funders where they are and constantly adapt to changing needs as necessary. This equity-centered approach to philanthropy demonstrates the power of strategy and intentionality within the field. It also ensures that giving can feel as fulfilling as possible for both funders and grantees.

Aligning Strategy & Philanthropy:

TPI's work centers around strategic philanthropy. I've learned that effective giving goes beyond money; it involves collaboration, programming, and thought-partnership. I believe this type of philanthropy helps move the needle forward, especially for social justice issues as a whole – but also for sustainability efforts for nonprofits themselves. Of course, dollars are useful, but the support foundations can provide beyond that seems to make a longer-term and more impactful difference.

In conclusion, my summer fellowship at TPI has deepened my understanding of philanthropy and the positive impact that strategic advising and consulting can have on the sector. TPI staff help bridge two worlds and, in doing so, help break down systemic barriers that have historically pervaded the nonprofit sector. Additionally, this fellowship has given me broad exposure and insight into both grantees and grantors. For prospective students looking for a wider scope and lens within the field of philanthropy, I highly recommend The Philanthropic Initiative as your summer fellowship site. I am grateful for the opportunity to learn with and from this organization's inspiring staff, especially as I round out my MBA program and consider career opportunities post-Heller.