

Project E-Quality: Missed Opportunities

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ABSTRACT

Moorhead State College, now Minnesota State University Moorhead, launched Project E-Quality in the fall of 1968. The assassination of Martin Luther King, Jr. awakened MSC—as it did other white-dominant institutions of higher learning—to the civil rights movement and, in particular, to the racial inequalities that existed in the nation.¹ The project's mission was based on the belief that MSC had a “responsibility to make an effort to bring minority students here.”² The recruitment focused on three groups: African Americans, American Indians, and Chicanos. African Americans made up the majority of the students recruited and were the primary focus of this project; they were recruited from the urban areas of the Midwest and the South. MSC made no concerted effort to recruit American Indians; the few that enrolled came from the nearby Indian Reservation, and they self-recruited. The Chicano students were primarily migrant farmworkers from Texas and were recruited while working in the sugarbeet fields in the surrounding area. The history of Project E-Quality is documented through primary sources, oral history interviews, and photographs. Critical to this research was filling the historical gap with the voices of American Indian and Chicano participants while also amplifying the voices and experiences of African American students.

Keywords: American Indians; Blacks; Chicanos; Discrimination; Higher Education.

¹ Hannah Mae Vanorny, “Shattering the Color Barrier: Black Students, White Colleges, and the Story of Project E-Quality at Moorhead State College (1968—1974).” Thesis (M.S.)—North Dakota State University, 2005., 12-13

² Roland Dille, Oral Interview of Roland Dille” (1985). *Oral Interviews*. 1. https://red.mnstate.edu/oral_interviews/1.