

University of Minnesota Sesquicentennial Diversity Project

Interview with Bill Stewart

Interviewed by Ann Pflaum

Interviewed on March 19, 2001

Bill Stewart - BS

Ann Pflaum - AP

AP: This is an interview on March 19 with Bill Stewart, University of Minnesota Morris. Bill and I are talking about the minority programs at the University of Minnesota Morris and more broadly at the University of Minnesota. Bill, I'll let you continue the discussion we have been having.

BS: What I'll do is follow your outline and summarize information that you already have. For instance, the first question, "How long has this program existed at the University?" The forerunner of it began in 1971 with Dr. Michael Harris, who was a professor in biology, and Duane Dunkley, who were really investigating the need for the program. The first students recruited were athletes from New Jersey, Missouri, and Minnesota. It isn't until 1973 when the program structured under my management and became a program rather than an investigation of the need for the program. That required a plan, a mission statement, goals and objectives, and working out those goals and objectives with both the academic and student personnel units, and developing a staff to operate the program. Now this is not a very simple process because you are attempting to change an institution; make some changes in the institution as well as the surrounding community because it's a very small community. Students coming in from primarily metropolitan areas experience culture shock. The question becomes for the institution, what types of programs are necessary in order for these students to succeed? That information I think you have in materials. We had to develop a management by objectives. It took time; we couldn't do that in a few years. Transforming an institution and bringing those types of students into that institution requires a beginning and a constant change as the institution changes so that the programs are relevant, and a coordination as the institution changes, and I think you'll find that. You'll see that in the diagram; you'll see it in the programs. You'll see that it involves both faculty and staff and organizing and building these programs. You'll find that it's unique for an institution of this size because initially when we began there was considerable doubt as to whether the program could succeed. We started with twenty-five students—only Indians and black—and wound up with over three hundred students, sixteen percent of the population relative to twelve percent at the Twin Cities.

AP: Has that number of students of color been maintained, the sixteen percent in the student body here?

BS: I think so. If we follow the procedures of providing those services that are needed, and that would be adequate financial aid; proper academic advising and counseling; tending to their psychosocial needs; providing internships, mentorships that include not only faculty but alumni; and a pre-collegiate program that we have such as Gateway, to bring in those students who may not meet the criteria; develop credited summer courses in English, math and computers, which are the basis of those student's operation; then track them through until they graduate. That process summarily if you look at it, will be the ME3 [Minority Education Enrichment and Enhancement] process. If you look at it, you will see the established relationship between the community and the college and how they work that process through. They both grow through a process of working with the teachers who know how to teach those students. We provide the technology on the methods that are needed. The next process is to bring in students for summer experiences. The third process is to go back into the community with the teachers and the students. The fourth process is to develop the Gateway program as you need it, and gradually the students in the math and sciences go back either into the community or do the teaching thing. It's a continuous process. In my mind, I think it's the area where the university needs to go in terms of working with those types of communities that need that input to succeed.

AP: When I was here before and we talked about some of your programs, you mentioned keeping in touch with some of your colleagues in Washington and in the Twin Cities. Could you talk a little bit about that?

BS: Initially when I first came here, the question was, where are we going to get the students? My initial response was to not only to seek students from Minnesota, but get them nationally as well as statewide. So I did work with people in Washington, D.C., to get a small group of students here, but the problem was financial. If we had had in-state tuition that we have now for the top twenty-five percent in high school, I think that would have made a large difference in getting those students from Washington, D.C., specifically there. As a result, we used it in terms of Chicago, which was one of our largest outlets for a variety of students, and moved to New Orleans and Wisconsin, and some of the other outlying areas. But our major supplier was Chicago from the Talent Search there, Ada S. McKinley, Educational Services, and Silas Purnell.

AP: They helped with recruiting students?

BS: A great deal. That was mainly our source for not only getting students from there, but all over the country.

AP: How did you know about them?

BS: What I'm saying is that he built Ada S. McKinley's Educational Services program. They hired him and he built it. It's not a united fund, but sort of like it.

AP: He was out of Chicago? Did he operate in Chicago, but on a national base?

BS: But he also has connections. You see, TRIO program has Upward Bound, Talent Search, and Special Service program.

AP: And those were federally funded?

BS: They have programs all over the country. In fact, today it built itself from two hundred something to nine hundred million dollars. MAEOPP is Midwest Association of Equal Opportunity Program Planners. We've got SAEOPP, you know. There's one in the west; there's one in the Midwest; there's one in the New York area; they're all over. That's how we got acquainted with them and started to recruit. We attend their functions because as far as disadvantaged students are concerned, they are the lead in the country for those types of students. Forty-four percent of their students are white. It's interesting. But it initially started out with black and other students. I forgot two other things. That is, students need role models when they come to this institution, so you've got to deal with such things as curriculum and also such items as faculty and staff.

AP: And kind of challenging in a small place like this to do that.

BS: Yes, that's a challenge. If we look at where we are now relative to the curriculum, we do not have an Afro-American Studies or others, but we have influenced the curriculum such that courses that are being taught include minorities, and we developed IS-1200, which is Institutional Racism: Problems and Issues of Race, in the sociology department. That was a course, independent study, that was used initially to teach students how to study, how to write, and it also reflected their experiences. I've got that course outline because it's very inclusive. You asked me about the history, is there any information on the history? Some of that is included, not detailed, in the forty-year birthday, and you'll find some of that there. Also, it's ongoing, and I am writing a book on The History of the Transformation of Non-White Students at a Predominantly White Institution: the University of Minnesota Morris, a case study.

AP: That will be a welcome addition to the literature. That will be wonderful.

BS: I'm working with Dr. Barcelo.

AP: Rusty, sure.

BS: She has financed a student to work with us. We'll also go down to the Twin Cities and work with Dr. Myers to see the relationship between the university and this institution. That's why I showed you these, because it will be somewhere in-between

those two, and I think more inclusive to a degree because we are going to talk about an institution—how do you work with an institution? We'll talk about the beginning, the mid-point and the twenty-first century and how this program has evolved. It didn't start out the same way. What you will find is that faculty have been very instrumental and is there now. In question number 4 I'll explain. ME3 was developed by faculty. Project SEE [Summer Education Experience] was done by faculty. I'll go through that in question 4. As I told you, history is ongoing. We'll be doing that and hopefully finish it within two years. Here's the outline.

AP: Terrific. You've got it so nicely organized by periods, technological information, age, and students are going up each period. That will be such a gift, the scholarships.

BS: The third question raised is, "Are there other materials, magazines, brochures, newsletters, videotapes and other things that can be copied for the Archives?" You have the World Touch [Cultural Heritage Week] brochures. However, that does not explain the essence of the program because the program was created as an informal educational tool. The idea, when we talked about World Touch, we were talking about not only the U of M campus, but also the community at large to extend nationally as well as all over the world as to what was happening to minorities. We felt that as change took place in the Third World that that change would be reflected, which included those ethnic and racial minorities, would be reflected on the national and local scene in higher education. We feel that, in other words, you touch my world and I touch your world. The idea was a variety of experiences through which individuals could build relationships based on trust, open up communication and reduce the stereotypes and fears, and the goal was to build true brotherhood in an atmosphere free of fear. You'll note that most of our themes each year have taken on the U.N.'s theme and we bring in those speakers and adapt our program to reflect that as it affects our ethnic and racial minorities in this country.

AP: That's interesting. So you pick U.N. theme.

BS: That's right. We use it every year. This one – "Beyond Roots: Survival, Crisis and Coexistence."

AP: When you say "U.N. theme," what part of the U.N. do you mean?

BS: The United Nations has a theme generally every year that they address problems in the world. We look at that.

AP: That makes a lot of sense.

BS: So you will find that in most now.

AP: So this is the eighteenth year or the nineteenth?

BS: Twenty-eighth.

AP: Twenty-eighth? Wow. Twenty-eight consecutive years.

BS: This is the first one. Look at this one. This really explains what we had. Do you remember when the Wounded Knee trials were? We had them here. We had Russell Means; Mark Lane was the attorney. We couldn't get Kunstler, but we got Lane. Then we got Dick Gregory here.

AP: And this is a listing of the past . . .

BS: That was the first one.

AP: Oh, the first program in 1974. A complete set of those for the Archives would be fabulous; very important resource.

BS: The artwork, at first we did some of our own, but then the artwork you'll see has been done by community artists. One artist is known all over the state in the black community. Another is by Matthew Uses-the-knife, whose work has been displayed in Chicago and other places. You're going to see that because that's been changed, but generally that was the plan. That was a reflection of what we wanted to do in the office, too. If you look in the office, as you walk in the office, we have a large painting we call "Universal Mother." Around that mother is all the four ethnic racial groups. Then we develop paintings for each particular group for a room. We had one of Martin Luther King; one of the three heroes of Mexico; one for Chief Joseph of Nez Perce; then there was another for the Asian group. We were going to do a mural on the big wall that would have involved all four, but we never really approached that. That wall was going to be done by an artist who would come in and take students and help paint it. But that's World Touch. *Expressions* – One of the things we did when we did World Touch was develop a literary publication called *Expressions*. This included student writings as well as writings relative to particular program that year. That did two things: it allowed the students to develop their own creativity, and it also exposed them to people and writings, so it served two purposes.

AP: And you've done those most years or a number of years?

BS: We did it for I think four years. No one has continued that since that education program left.

AP: Again, that's the kind of thing that will be just wonderful for the Archives.

BS: We did attend conferences. I looked at the program in three ways. We were going to do research, be involved in the community, and teaching. That's what the faculty is concerned with, and that's what the institution is concerned with. Our community is more

or less involved with Cultural Heritage Week. You'll see that we have other programs here now. Tutoring is another program in the community. [end of side 1]

BS: [beginning of side 2] Teaching is at IS-1200. [Shows various programs, presentations and papers from conferences] These conferences we attended and presented. This is at LaCrosse, Wisconsin, the Annual Conference on Minority Studies. That went on for several years. Burt Ahern attended that attended that. We attended that.

AP: Are there copies of the papers that you've done that could go into the Archives?

BS: We'd have to look. MAEOPP (Midwest Association of Equal Opportunity Program Planners). Those are your TRIO programs: Upward Bound, Talent Search, Special Service programs are on the college level. You have an Upward Bound program, an excellent one, in the Twin Cities, by Bruce Schelske. He's in General College. He's well known. They've done research on legal matters in Upward Bound. I'll get to that because you asked me somewhere about that. Then you need to talk to him because he's been there since 1973. His wife, his brother, and others have done research. They are very active with MAEOPP. These are the ten state areas of Minnesota, Michigan, Missouri, Kansas, Illinois . . . I'd have to get a map that would show you. But there are ten states. Then you have others in the west, New York City, and other places. But we were very active in that organization. That kept us abreast of what was going on in special student needs. I'll give you some of that so you can look at that because you will see that.

Question number 4: Are there any special projects or grants that we have? I'll go in chronological order. Educational Development Program (EDP) was examining testing methods for minority students.

AP: Was it a federally funded program or state?

BS: No, from the University Twin Cities we applied for and got. The second was Project SEE, by Dr. Joe Letterell. Do you remember that? That's been ten years old. That was Dwight Eisenhower. We first got National Science Foundation money. Then it became Dwight Eisenhower monies. The Faculty Incentive Grant was also money gotten from the Twin Cities, which involved faculty and working with our students. That put satellite computers in our office. Faculty worked with students directly with no pay. Dr. Joe Letterell was instrumental in getting that one.

AP: I'm trying to remember him. Where was he from?

BS: He was just outside of St. Cloud. I'll get that information for you. The next one was Title IV grant. I don't know if it's Title III or Title IV.

AP: I think it's Title III.

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AP: I think it's Title III.

BS: Title III, right. That grant established the Academic Assistance Center, and also developed our computer lab.

AP: By "our computer lab," do you mean the minority student programs or the whole university?

BS: For the whole university at Morris. The question was, Should they put the academic assistance in the minority student programs, and Steve said they'll never come.

AP: So they put it in . . .

BS: In the library. And they hired a new person. That's how we got the Academic Assistance Center, through a grant.

AP: And that was Steve Granger?

BS: Yes. The next matter was the mentorship program that was worked through with the Admissions and Career Planning Placement Office. The idea there was to get a certain number of students in every year to work with faculty. They supplied college work-study money for that, and tried to get money from the Twin Cities but weren't able to do that. So that's still going on.

AP: So where did the money come from if it didn't come from the Twin Cities?

BS: College work-study from here. There is so much money allocated every year. So if a student starts out in sophomore year and proceeds on, then that moves in to some of our other programs that are here for students. The next one was the Gateway Program.

AP: And that's a pre-college?

BS: Yes. That's been in existence for, I think, more than five years. That funding came from Office of Minority and Special Student Affairs. I think that funding is about fifty-some thousand dollars a year. That's still going on. The next program is the alumni mentorship program, which has been funded by American Express. You can get brochures on that.

AP: Does that have a minority as well as a majority student focus?

BS: Minority.

AP: It is explicitly minority mentorships.

BS: Because you have minority alumni. They work with students in terms of mentoring, looking for job opportunities, and things of that nature. So those are the programs. You

can see that that was an evolutionary process. It just didn't happen right away. Of course, that's ME3; I didn't put that in there, did I? ME3 was an outgrowth of Project SEE. Project SEE was a summer program for students interested in science. They usually brought them up for five weeks, and they worked on experiments and biology, math, computer science, chemistry, and other areas with faculty. The Eisenhower grant ceased because they felt that we should work with teachers, people who were teaching. They cut off our funds. We went down to the Twin Cities and came up with that ME3 program, working with teachers. We received discretionary monies from Minnesota Higher Education Coordinating Board for that. We work with teachers from the Twin Cities, Chicago, and teachers in this area.

AP: It was in the summer, right?

BS: There were teachers from Hoffman; there were teachers from Morris; there were others. They found that they had some common ground problems and they had for two weeks. You can find information on that. But that's where we began our five year process. We were not able to fund the summer students anymore, and we weren't able to go back in the community, but we did have the teaching program. That has ceased, but we are still looking for funds for that. The Gateway program is there, but the process is there.

AP: So you need funding for the program for the teachers?

BS: Right. We don't have that anymore, but we are trying to get that. If we can receive funds over a four-year period for the whole thing, we can do it. One other point I tried to encourage, which may be still possible, they need to look for . . . You know, at Carleton, not Carleton, but . . . there are monies possible if they attempt to get it, because Bruce Schelske has applied for Upward Bound program. At one point they asked that both the Twin Cities and Morris coordinate their program. We haven't done that, but St. Benedict's has an Upward Bound program, you know. I think it's very possible we need to look toward that in the sciences, which could include a group of rural students as well as some of our other students.

AP: Is the St. Ben's program in the sciences already, or is that in something else?

BS: That's St. Benedict's. It's an Upward Bound program. They have a group of schools they go and work with those kids.

AP: Do they work in the sciences primarily?

BS: That's right. I'm saying sciences would be the field we should build with a new building. I think we should look, because when you look at the minority community, the problem that they face now is in the sciences, and then the computer age. That's something very important.

In question number 5, you ask if there are former or current staff, students, and faculty whose contributions to diversity we should recognize. Yes, but I'm in the process of getting names. I could name them for you.

AP: This is sort of for us, too. Since you're doing this, we don't need to know this.

BS: One person I think really needs recognition is Ida B. Stewart. She was in Triple T. Do you remember Triple T?

AP: No.

BS: Teacher Training Teacher program? Remember Dr. Charles Bruning in Education? Bruning was here for a short time. He ran that program. Burt Ahern knows about it because he was part of it. That's what brought my wife here. If she had not come here—she substituted for dean Edmond for two years—I wouldn't be here. She has done a lot of research and work. She's got two bachelor's degrees, two master's degrees—one of them from the Twin Cities in Ed Psych. She's got a master's from St. Thomas in curriculum development, and she's working on her Ph.D. now in critical pedagogy. She helped develop Cultural Heritage Week. She did IS-1200. She wrote the bylaws for Women of Color here, and she has done a number of other things—very active. If I talk about students, there is a Lisa Tate Williams who has a Ph.D. in biopsychology and she teaches at Howard University. You've got Dr. Kevin Nakagaki who is in your dental school as an instructor. You've got Dr. Michael Rodriguez in one of your departments there.

AP: These are Morris graduates or graduates of these programs?

BS: Yes. I can give you a list. You've got people like Elaine Russo, who was a judge for the tribe. You've got Duane Dunkley. Ron Simmons is a principal at North High. I'd have to include Dr. Joe Latterell, Dr. Engin Sungur here; naturally Dr. Imholte and Dr. Stephen Granger, because they are the ones that supported these programs. You have Dr. Nadhar, Dr. Ahern, Dr. Solomon Gashaw . . . there are a number of people. In particular, if it hadn't been for Imholte and Granger, the program would not have gotten to where it is. And we went through some troubling times. There was a study done here in 1978 by Dr. Gloria Williams and Clarence Carter. They were brought in because the black student union had a problem. They did a study, and the minority experience committee came as a result of it. Jack Imholte worked with that. But that developed the minority experience committee, which is one of the committees that look at curriculum and academic assistance; they are involved with faculty and employment; they are also concerned with curriculum in those areas. One thing I think you should look through, though, which you have, is that there is a William B. Stewart Scholarship Fund set up. That is for students who are majoring in science and math or going on to graduate school. I think that is very significant because we've already raised \$28,000, and we're going to try to reach \$100,000 or more, which would then fund one ethnic racial student from each group every year. [end of interview]