



Education and National Values

The Foundation is undoubtedly an important part of the history of Moorhead State as well as the Fargo-Moorhead community. But the Foundation is also a part of the history of American education. And education has always been a fundamental part of our national fabric.

Americans have been committed to education since the first settlements were established in the seventeenth century. The early colonists of Massachusetts, for example, decreed that each township provide support for schools and teachers. Colleges, such as Harvard and Dartmouth, were established well before decent roads became common. Americans thus expressed their hunger for learning before they even built a nation.

When the American nation was founded, its leaders knew that a free society could not long exist without *informed* citizens. Freedom, argued Thomas Jefferson, would die if all citizens could not “receive an education proportional to the conditions and pursuits of his life.” Jefferson put substance behind his words by proposing a complete system for universal education in his home state of Virginia. He also was the founding father of the University of Virginia, today one of the finest colleges in the country.

Some years after Jefferson, the education pioneer Horace Mann contended that every American child had as much right to learn as he did to “distend his lungs with a portion of the common air, [and] to open his eyes to the common light.” A government that would deny a child education, Mann concluded, was guilty of stealing that child’s birthright.

Mann was pleading for the funds to establish good schools in his home state. Such pleas did not end with

him, for as the nineteenth century progressed, educators found that they had to deal with legislators who feared the political results of raising taxes. The Abraham Lincoln legend — the myth of the lad who taught himself through desire and fortitude — was another roadblock to funding for schools; all that was needed for a school, went a Gilded Age saying, was a dedicated teacher at one end of a log and a serious child at the other end.

Moorhead State and the Community

In the early history of the Moorhead Normal School, we find Livingston Lord challenging this myth that good teachers and eager pupils automatically produced a *good* education. Quality education, he wrote, also needs “properly lighted, heated, and ventilated rooms; apparatus and books must be provided; the right subjects of instruction must be selected; and a good organization—not too loose, not too rigid—is necessary with a proper person at its head.”

As first president of Moorhead Normal School, Lord determined to employ expert faculty to teach the students to become themselves expert teachers. Lord insisted that the “ideal teacher” was not just someone versed in pedagogy, but someone who solidly knew and understood his subject as well. “What are the facts?” Lord demanded. His students would acquire facts in addition to skills, his faculty would teach content as well as process. From the beginning, then, Moorhead Normal graduates had a reputation for both teaching skill *and* subject knowledge.

Lord’s successors at Moorhead Normal — later, Moorhead State Teachers College — followed the path he had marked

out. They sought out and hired the best teachers they could get to train young people to be equally good and dedicated teachers. They pressed the legislature for budgets to sustain good programs, acceptable salaries, and decent facilities. They kept tuition as low as possible.

And they made efforts to offer something to the surrounding community as well. When the first class building was constructed on the campus, it contained an auditorium with 500 seats. There were only 42 students at the school, at first, so the orations, readings, and dramatic productions that echoed in the auditorium did so before audiences from both college and town. Clearly, Lord and his successors made the community a part of their educating efforts.

The college was a small one during the first six decades of its existence. Seldom more than a few hundred students were in attendance in any year. The administration was modest too: the president usually also taught classes, he had but a handful of supporting staff, many members of the small faculty also handled management chores. The situation was almost a family affair. Certainly many of the students came to feel that way. Graduates of Moorhead State left with their degrees and fond memories of their alma mater.

At the end of the Second World War, some things began to change. Americans began attending colleges in unprecedented numbers. More students meant more faculty, and during the next decade the nation's population of college professors doubled, then tripled. The number of colleges multiplied also, as did the number and variety of courses. Higher education was suddenly a larger part of the national economy, both as a supplier of trained personnel to industry, business, and government, and as a contributor to the gross national product.

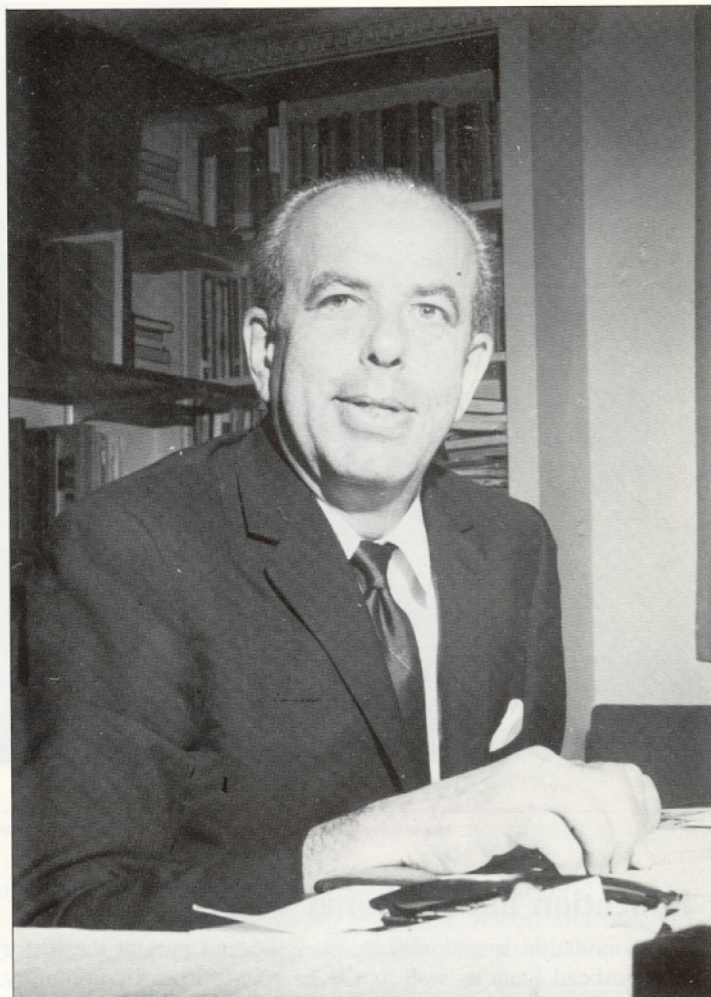
Moorhead State enjoyed the bounty of this era as much as any other school. The teacher training curriculum was expanded into a four-year liberal arts program, with new courses in physical and social sciences, languages, and humanities. By 1960, 74 professors on the campus were teaching some 200 different courses to over 1500 students. The tuition cost in that year was only \$3.50 per credit hour.

A school that changes so much, so suddenly, is bound to have some difficulties as well, and in this Moorhead State was also no exception. The college's drop-out rate rose dramatically — cheap tuition attracted many who simply were not capable of meeting the challenge. In 1962-63, for example, as much as 45% of the freshman class failed to return for the next year of classes.

It fell to John J. Neumaier, MSC president since 1958, to reaffirm the school's commitment to excellence. Working with his faculty, insisting that "mass education should not be an alibi for mediocrity," Neumaier developed some minimum admission standards in 1964. MSC was the first state college in Minnesota to have such standards, and the college's retention rate quickly improved.

Over the next few years, Neumaier took further steps designed to make MSC the "Harvard of the upper Midwest." He obtained unprecedented increases in faculty salaries, lowered the teacher/student ratio in the classrooms, and expanded programs.

Neumaier was not an elitist, however, and so campaigned for funds to expand scholarship programs for deserving students. He obtained his first scholarship money from donations by



John J. Neumaier, President of MSU in 1964, when minimum admission standards were implemented.

members of the Fargo-Moorhead community. In the mid-1960s, for example, the F-M Area Foundation contributed scholarship funds to the college. At about the same time, Neumaier obtained a yearly pledge of \$1000 for scholarships from the First National Bank of Moorhead whose president, Max Goldberg, was particularly interested in education. Others who gave early support to scholarships included James Trask of the Moorhead State Bank, Pern Canton of the American Bank and Trust, and Jim Durham of the First National Bank.

One of Neumaier's most interesting experiments was Project E-Quality, and it led the college directly into some organized fund raising. In 1968, Neumaier announced that Moorhead State would create a program to attract minority students to the college. He initiated the program because he "felt that our students were deprived—deprived of study with students from other backgrounds." Neumaier therefore authorized his Dean, Roland Dille, to seek funds for Project E-Quality.

Much of the funding for Project E-Quality came from federal aids programs, but Dille also solicited and received substantial contributions from private businesses and individuals in the community. By the fall of 1968, over \$15,000 was obtained in this fashion, and used to pay everything from administrative costs to personal expenses for some of the E-Quality students.

Many of those who gave financial support to Project E-Quality would later be among the founding members of the Foundation. Their motivation for aiding the project was a forecast of the Foundation's mission. By giving to E-Quality, they were, in the words of one supporter, investing in "the human worth and potential that exists in *all* people, regardless of race, creed, or color."



Neumaier discusses Project E-Quality with Dean Roland Dille

The unique nature of the Fargo-Moorhead community played a part in the success of such causes as Project E-Quality. Two cities, in different states, but separated only by the narrow Red River, the destinies of Fargo and Moorhead had been linked from the beginning. There were many occasions during which the two towns competed economically, and even socially. But this did not prevent the development of both into one thriving, cosmopolitan community that today offers to its inhabitants the combined cultural offerings of a symphony orchestra, an art museum, two historical museums and several historical landmarks, modern public libraries, and three colleges.

This cultural bounty is sufficient indication that the people of Fargo-Moorhead are the embodiment of Thomas Jefferson's "informed citizenry."

Establishing the Foundation

In January, 1968, John Neumaier submitted his resignation as President of MSC. He was leaving, he later said, partly because he felt that "the basic work and the direction of the college had been set." He suspected that Moorhead State would not be able to grow much more, and he wanted another challenge, so he left to take up a position in New York.

The Fargo **Forum** said that Neumaier's leaving was "a major loss to the Moorhead community." The architect of Project E-Quality and other innovations, Neumaier was at the height of his reputation and popularity. Many MSC students doubted that any successor could match Neumaier's "kind of charisma," and it was obvious then that the next president of MSC would follow a tough act.

Within weeks of the announcement, Moorhead's faculty recommended to the State University Board that one of their own become Neumaier's replacement. Roland Dille had joined the college in 1963, as a member of the English department. He quickly moved into administrative duties and in February 1967 became Academic Dean. One of his major activities as Dean had been the management of the Project E-Quality program. Dille was the first president of Moorhead State to be selected from among the faculty.

Dr. Clarence "Soc" Glasrud, as president of the Faculty Senate, said that the faculty's support of Dille indicated their hope that "the directions established by the present administration [would] be continued." Neumaier himself called his successor "an intellectually superior scholar, and a man of compassion." Neumaier was "confident," he concluded, that under Dille "Moorhead State College will become one of the leading academies of the nation."

But before such a day could arrive, Neumaier's successor faced a number of challenges. Dille knew that as president of MSC he would "face a different situation" from his predecessor. Although he had some new programs in mind that he "wanted to implement," he feared that Neumaier had been right: that MSC would not receive sufficient resources from the State Legislature to continue growing.

The basis of Dille's worry was a matter of simple arithmetic. For fifteen years America's colleges and universities had enjoyed the fruits of prosperity. A seemingly endless number of young people were pouring into colleges and rising budgets, larger faculties, and bigger campuses were the result. Higher enrollments had demanded higher budgets which in turn generated higher taxes to pay for it all. But the upward spiral could not go on forever. The number of available students would inevitably decline because the "baby boom" era was ending. Moreover, inflation was also rising and there was a growing demand for tax relief. If legislative support for education suddenly declined, then colleges like MSC might also decline.

During the late 1960s a number of incidents suggested that the expansion of higher education in Minnesota was indeed coming to an end. In 1966, the State College Board briefly considered a limit to MSC enrollment — no more than 5800 students by 1975. Neumaier had managed to prevent this from happening. In 1968, however, the Board cut the college's budget request by \$2 million. Meanwhile, the Minnesota Taxpayers Association announced that the state's middle class families were paying the highest state income taxes in the nation. Experts were predicting that many middle class parents would soon have to choose between sending their children to college or securing their own retirement.

All of this concerned Dille greatly. His own staff was advising him that by 1975 at least 7500 students would seek to enroll at MSC, and many would need financial aid. Addressing the State Board in 1969, Dille referred to this, pointed out that MSC had had the largest increase in enrollment of any of the state colleges, and asked how budgets could be reduced without placing "some strain on our programs?" But the legislators, pressured to reduce taxes, could offer him no comfort.

If the Legislature had no solution, then how could Dille find the money to continue a quality program, let alone enlarge upon it?

It was clear that other sources of funding would be necessary, so Dille decided to get some expert help in that field. In June, 1969, he announced that the College had hired a man named Chet Lacy to become the college's first Director of Development.

Lacy was a Minnesota native, had substantial newspaper and public relations experience, and had been for seven years the director of fund raising at St. Olaf College. With 16 years in the fields of public relations and fund raising for higher education, he had the experience, the imagination, and the drive to tackle Moorhead State's situation.



Vincent Murphy recruited many of the earliest members of the Presidents Club, and was the third Foundation President

Within a month of arriving at MSC, Lacy had outlined a fund raising program for the college. Echoing Dille's own thoughts, he began with the proposition that "opportunities for achieving excellence and greatness in higher education" must require support in addition to that from the Legislature. This support, he stressed, should be obtained by "professionally organized, coordinated efforts" that would not only raise money, but also "make long-time friends" for the college as well.

To achieve this, Lacy suggested that Moorhead State should look for voluntary donations from the Fargo-Moorhead community, then from the alumni, the parents of students, and finally the granting agencies. Lacy then turned to an organization for this effort. He pointed out that a separate, incorporated foundation would be the best approach, particularly if it had tax-exempt status. He then laid out a format for such a foundation, with a board of directors, a committee structure, and draft articles of incorporation.

Finally Lacy stressed that, as the purpose of a foundation would be to obtain "voluntary support of a state college," MSC would have to engage in an "extensive program of information." Only careful promotion, he argued, could overcome the reluctance of many to give aid to a tax-supported public school.

Lacy's plan of action would require both the recruiting of a

very committed group of community leaders and an intense public relations effort by President Dille. Knowing that much of his own time and energy would be needed to implement Lacy's ideas, Dille accepted the plan with few modifications.

In order to make a good beginning, it was decided to recruit the charter members of the foundation during the fall of 1969. Each charter member would be a person who agreed to contribute \$2,500 to the foundation over a five year period, and would, in turn, become a member of the first board of directors. Because they were uncertain just how many people they could recruit on these terms, Dille and Lacy did not set a target number.

The first two recruits to the cause were both community business leaders and MSC alumni. Vincent Murphy, a graduate of the college in 1940 and a former teacher, had been one of the prime movers in reorganizing the Alumni Association during the 1950s, and was thus well placed to promote the new fund raising effort among former MSC students. Dille asked Murphy to become the temporary chairman of the embryo foundation. Murphy readily accepted, because without Moorhead State he "would never have had an education."

Dave Torson, the second recruit, was like Murphy an alumnus. A successful community businessman, who had supported the college in the past, he had the kind of persuasiveness that would be needed to get the foundation off to a strong start.

Now Dille, Torson, Lacy, and Murphy set out to get additional recruits from the Fargo-Moorhead community. The first person who Lacy and Torson called on was Mrs. Frances Frazier Comstock. The daughter-in-law of Solomon Comstock, herself a graduate of the Normal School he had helped create in 1885, Frances Comstock was more than willing to join the foundation venture. The same was true of the next contact, Mrs. Clara Kornberg, who had once taught at Moorhead State, and like Frances Comstock had contributed scholarship money to the college on many previous occasions. Both women thought that a foundation would become the best way to create an ongoing system of support for the college.

Others quickly followed the lead of these first few, so quickly that Dr. Dille later admitted he was "astonished" at the pace of success. With sixteen individuals pledged to charter membership by early November, Dille, Murphy, and Lacy decided to move forward and file papers incorporating the foundation.

To formally mark the moment, the charter members met at the Rex Cafe on December 19, 1969, and placed their signatures to the "Articles of Incorporation [of] Moorhead State College Foundation." The Foundation members pledged to raise funds and obtain properties "for the benefit of Moorhead State College," and to use the income derived from their efforts for "the advancement of scientific, literary and educational knowledge" at the college. As a non-profit corporation, the Foundation further pledged that no member would obtain "pecuniary gain" from its operations. This document was filed with the Minnesota Secretary of State's office on January 21, 1970. (The entire text of the Incorporation Document, with the names of the charter members, is given in Appendix 1.)

The charter members also formed themselves as the first Board of Directors, elected Dave Torson to be the Foundation's president for its first year of operation, and chose an Executive Committee consisting of Torson, Lacy, Clarence "Soc" Glasrud, J.L. Durham, and Marvin Koeplin. They also voted

to continue recruiting members at the \$2,500 level of support, to call this “the Presidents Club,” to use the First National Bank of Moorhead for their transactions, and to begin soliciting smaller donations.

The MSC Foundation was in business.



Charter members of the Foundation, and the First Executive Committee. (standing, left to right)—John Jenkins, Marvin Koepflin, President Dille, Chet Lacy; (seated, left to right)—J.L. Durham, Dave Torson, Soc Glasrud.

The Foundation's Early Years

The Foundation quickly attracted attention. The Vice-Chancellor of the State College System came to Moorhead during the summer of 1970 to have a look at this “pilot program.” He explained to the Executive Committee that the Foundation’s mission of seeking “private philanthropy” was an experiment that each of the other state colleges would be watching with interest, and predicted that success by the Foundation would provide Moorhead State with an “edge of excellence in education.”

Mindful, therefore, that their efforts would become precedents for other schools, Dave Torson and his Executive Committee began to structure the Foundation’s efforts. A committee system was established, with sections for the dispersal of funds, the development of projects and membership, deferred giving, and special tasks. The Executive Committee also developed written procedures and a set of By-Laws (see Appendix 2 for the current By-Laws). Then they returned to the goal of expanding the Presidents Club.

Dave Torson still remembers that Dille was at first very nervous about asking people to join the Foundation. He was “not experienced” at asking people for money. Vincent Murphy, reflecting on the beginnings of the Foundation, also remembers how Dille was “very uncomfortable” at some of the early calls. But Dille’s palpable commitment to the school obviously overcame any lack of practice, because, as Torson recalls, they had “sold the Presidents Club” to 20 of 20 prospects by early 1970.

Dille, who claims that he still is not at ease in fund raising, believes that community spirit, not salesmanship, was responsible for the early success. “People in Moorhead and Fargo were proud of their cities, and knew that the colleges were part of what makes this such a fine place to live. So, when we were in need, they didn’t hesitate; I won’t ever forget that.”

Nevertheless, the Foundation had to make substantial efforts to raise funds beyond the Presidents Club contributions. The economic climate in Fargo-Moorhead was dismal in the early 1970s. Inflation and taxes were high, and many businesses had difficulty making ends meet. Vincent Murphy remembers that several of the prospects he approached for donations turned him down because “times were bad.”

Another factor hampering support was the obstacle that Chet Lacy had foreseen: some prospects said that they already gave to Moorhead State through taxes, so why should they give more? The dilemma was sharpened by the already well-established fund raising programs of North Dakota State University, and particularly Concordia College. As Dille put it, “if there were two spare dollars in town, many people thought a private college should get \$1.50 of it.” In the face of such obstacles, only perseverance could prevail.

By the time of the April, 1970, meeting of the Board of Directors, the Foundation had obtained some \$22,000 in gifts and pledges, which Lacy judged to be “ahead of [the] original schedule.” Having already agreed to devote the lion’s share of this money to scholarships, the Board proceeded to award grants-in-aid to 34 MSC students. In accepting the scholarships, MSC financial aid officer David Anderson remarked that help on such a scale had “never been available at the College before.”



Dave Torson was the first president of the Moorhead State Foundation.