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Michigan's Move Toward Equality. Take any Extension Service and count the women in administrative positions. Chances are that the Michigan Cooperative Extension Service in 1975 was typical—very low percentage of minorities and evidence of stagnation of women and minority staff in certain job slots.

But now, the minority staff has increased; one has been promoted to state staff. Four women are now in county director positions. A management training program has been started with special emphasis on attracting women and minorities.

How did these changes take place? What motivated the top decision makers at Michigan State University (mostly white and male) to change directions?

It started with a chance remark at the MSU Annual Extension Conference in 1975: "How many women do you have in the College of Agriculture?" The male guest speaker jokingly replied, "Too many!" The number of women in the College of Agriculture and Natural Resources wasn't overwhelming.

The remark, "Too many!" wasn't taken lightly by some attending that meeting. Two MSU Extension home economists, Mary Peters and I, felt a need to promote the growth and development of women in their area of interest. We reasoned that attitudes are often unconscious, bound up in traditions. We felt these issues should be discussed by all staff. We knew long-range changes should be endorsed by administration.

How were these changes in attitudes approached? We struggled against fear, and tried to be assertive as we made our approach. The first move was to consult with Carroll Wamhoff, staff training director, concerning staff training to identify and modify attitudes on sexism and racism.

Then we met with the director, associate director, two regional supervisors, and the staff training director.

Frequently, we were asked: "What is your ultimate goal?" Our answer was simple . . . to maximize the talents

available to Extension by hiring minorities and changing policies that kept women and minorities in lower-status jobs. We sensed a real difficulty in adhering to the legal responsibilities in Affirmative Action without making advances within Extension.

Our goal was well-received and, within a month, work was underway. We also approached our professional organization, Michigan Association of Extension Home Economists, where our goal was promptly endorsed.

The administrative committee met with the MSU Human Resources staff to develop a program for communicating the goal to other staff members. The Human Resources staff recommended that a training plan be instituted with an outside agency. An outside agency could see the organization objectively and wouldn't bring a personal bias against the employer, MSU.

Extension administration hired the firm Neely, Campbell, Gibb, Terry and Associates of Ann Arbor, Michigan. The firm has a good reputation for helping industries and organizations in planning and implementing effective Affirmative Action programs.

The training dates were set and participants were sent a personal opinion survey before the workshop to stimulate thoughts on the issues. Examples of some of the questions were:

1. How has sexism personally affected you? Have you experienced it?
2. In trying to create racial justice in organizations, what are the particular leadership contributions minorities can make?

State level administrators, program leaders, and supervisors were invited. Selected field staff (predominately women and minorities) were also included in the training. These people were picked for their input on the reality of sexism and racism in their personal lives and work situations.

The workshop was designed to cover the following topics:

- First day: Understanding the issues—definition of racism-sexism, developing a common language, and experiencing the dynamics of power.
- Second day: Legal and moral requirements—concepts underlying the law, accountabilities of the manager, status of Michigan Extension Service, and concerns and issues of racism and sexism as perceived by men, women, and minorities.
- Third day: Planning and implementation—Affirmative Action

goals for Michigan Extension Service, planning exercises to deal with issues such as recruitment, and EEO official structure.

A variety of experiences were used to further the workshop goals:

1. Simulation of the condition and psychological feelings of the "haves" and "have-nots" in society. (It used a game called Star Power that involves trading chips with weighted values.)
2. The film, "Eye of the Storm," which tells of an experiment set up by a third-grade teacher in a small, all-white eastern town. (One day all brown-eyed children suffered discrimination and the next day all blue-eyed children were labeled as inferior.)
3. The film, "I Am Woman," featuring Helen Reddy, the well-known singer. (Interviews of men and women revealed traditional and liberated attitudes about women.)
4. O.E.O. Handbook exercise to test knowledge of Affirmative Action laws. (A slide-tape program told the story of a manager who believed he practiced nondiscrimination and was shocked to find himself involved in a lawsuit.)
5. Role-play exercise to demonstrate conservative, liberal, and "new-color conscious" modes of behavior in response to situations that occur in Cooperative Extension work.

These experiences aroused many feelings that peaked on the third day when a serious effort at actual bargaining among participants began. This was an effort to meet the challenge of Affirmative Action within Extension by negotiations among people with differing views.

Representatives of the four groups present (administration, program leaders, regional supervisors, and field staff) sat in the middle of the room for the "bargaining circle," while the others sat silently around them. Proposals were put forth and responses made. Each representative could take "time out" to consult with his/her constituency.

The field staff asked for some specific goals:

1. Increase the percentage of minorities among professional staff from 3% to 6% by 1980.
2. Increase the promotion of minorities and women by 1980.
3. Appoint an Affirmative Action officer or committee to monitor progress.

4. Revise job descriptions that reinforce racism and sexism
5. Offer sexism-racism training to all staff at the 1976 regional conferences.

No promises were made that day, but, as a result of the training, it was decided to expose the other field staff to this experience.

A new committee, including minority and women field staff, was formed to plan a one-day training experience for the regional conferences in March. The consulting firm helped plan and conduct the training. The objective—to help understand values, attitudes, and behaviors about racism and sexism.

The four regional conferences were successful. An idea had become a reality. Progressive steps that have been taken include:

1. Four experienced home economists have been named to county director positions.
2. A black 4-H agent was promoted to state staff.
3. A special management traineeship, with a 50% female enrollment, was inaugurated.
4. Project PACE, a new program dedicated to training home economists in public policy education, has begun.
5. The Michigan Association of Extension Home Economists formed a committee to study salaries.
6. Increased awareness of the problem has been clearly demonstrated.

Through the efforts of all levels of staff, there's an increased commitment to expanding opportunities for minorities and women. Despite tradition, changes have been made that have strengthened Affirmative Action in the Michigan Cooperative Extension Service.