



# THE ROCKEFELLER UNIVERSITY

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OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT

July 17, 1978

Dr. Leonard S. Lerman  
Dept. of Biological Sciences  
The University at Albany  
1400 Washington Avenue  
Albany, NY 12222

Re: Dr. Richard S. Young  
Your search for Vice President  
for Research/Dean of Graduate  
Studies

Dear Len:

I have known Dr. Young for over 15 years. During that time he has occupied a variety of roles: as an experimental biologist and then later with more and more administrative responsibility for biological work in NASA. His work has brought him into daily contact with a wide variety of professionals in the engineering and physical as well as biological sciences, with administrators and budget makers, and with a wide range of scientific and technical information. He is a competent investigator; but his special skill is as an efficient coordinator of the efforts of other people. He has the rare quality of being able to work well with academic stars without being threatened by their reputation and other roles, in a way that I know is an important but rare qualification for an administrator at his level. These qualities are widely recognized and appreciated by his colleagues occupying many different niches. This would not be possible if he did not have an unusual sensitivity and respect for the needs of others, and deeply engrained standards of integrity and fairness in his interpersonal relationships, and commitments to the values of scholarly and scientific pursuits. His motivations for social utility and for educational efficacy are of the highest standard. So, both from the standpoint of his ideals and his ability to get things done in arenas that require that other people respect his efforts, he should indeed be an ideal candidate. There are many other positive traits that I might believe ought to be taken for granted as corollaries of what I have said; if I have left out anything that I believe would be relevant to this position, it is purely by inadvertence. He would bring a high degree of energy, devotion to accepted tasks, imagination and judgment, and I hope you have been able to configure the task to be able to attract him. I believe he would be especially suited for a role of leadership for science in an interdisciplinary context, which I believe is close to your own aspirations.

His leaving NASA would be in fact some personal loss to me since I have enjoyed working with him in that context. He has played an important though unheralded part in the success of the Viking mission. Nevertheless, no one can escape the prognostications about the long-range future of NASA

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funding of scientifically (as opposed to purely technically) oriented lines of work, and his position at NASA surely must become daily more frustrating for reasons beyond his control. But through gloomy and exhilarating occasions I have never seen him lose his balance, his good cheer and his determination to make the best of the most difficult situations, usually with unexpected success.

Yours sincerely,

Joshua Lederberg

JL/gel