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BOWERS, J. Z.

February 24, 1958

Dr. John Z. Bowers  
Dean  
University of Wisconsin  
School of Medicine  
Madison, Wisconsin

Dear John:

Professors Crow, Morton and myself have discussed on a number of occasions whether the most satisfactory basis of the teaching of genetics to medical undergraduates would not be the establishment of a uniform requirement, or at least strong encouragement, for this course as a pre-requisite to admission. An opportunity for this may arise if, as I understand is contemplated, the Zoology Department's course in embryology will be reduced from five to three hours. We realize that any step such as this should be undertaken cautiously and this letter is merely a preliminary notice and not yet a studied conclusion.

While discussing this however we wondered if there might not be some quasi-scientific approach to the question of optimum pre-requisites. I had in mind a statistical analysis of the last five or six years medical classes to establish what correlation, if any, there might be between the elective courses that had been taken by admitted students and their performance in medical school. This would include genetics but would by no means be limited to it. We realize that there would be great hazards in too detailed an interpretation of the results, but if no such study exists it might be worth while at least to collect the facts. Since the bulk of students at the medical school are graduates of the University of Wisconsin, we are in a favorable position here to conduct such a study.

It is not altogether unlikely that such studies have been made and I hope that you can refer me to them if that is the case. Another obvious tack would be to poll the students themselves with regard to their retrospective opinions on the value of those undergraduate college electives they had taken and the ones they wish they had.

Yours sincerely,

Joshua Lederberg  
Chairman, Department of Medical Genetics

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