

THE ROCKEFELLER UNIVERSITY

1230 YORK AVENUE

NEW YORK, NY 10021

June 11, 1980

JOSHUA LEDERBERG

PRESIDENT

Dr. Frank H. T. Rhodes
President
Cornell University
300 Day Hall
P. O. Box D.H.
Ithaca, New York 14853

Dear Frank:

Thank you for writing me on June 4th. Ted's resignation was a matter of deep distress to me; but even more were the circumstances that made it inevitable.

You will probably not be surprised about my response; and the purpose of my writing is less to convey information than to impel you to give very serious consideration to some more radical alternatives.

The structural problems at the Medical College-Hospital run so deep, that I feel you will not have an easy task in recruiting a replacement: who would both meet your consensual criteria, and who was in fact adequately informed about the setting he would be entering. With great luck you might be able to identify a singular individual who was already on the scene; and if this could be done quickly, you would then of course have the advantage of avoiding a painful interregnum. I have no particular candidate to suggest and failing that feel that some other alternatives should be considered. Stanford has had a somewhat similar experience; and as you know, 18 months later, they are still far from having resolved their dilemmas of choice, and the difficulties of recruitment (into what is perhaps still a rather less problematical setting than I see across East 68th Street).

So what I have to suggest is that you take the occasion to mount a more far-reaching inquiry as to the fundamental nature of the University's interest in medical education in general, and in the Medical College-Hospital in particular. One can for example raise quite legitimate questions, today, about the need for continuing to invest so heavily in undergraduate medical education at a time when medical manpower

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forecasts are so uncertain about future needs. I suspect the answer to the question would still be positive but there is no better time than now to examine it. Even given a positive answer, one could contemplate a wide variety of alternative structures, and some of them perhaps more viable to sustain the diverse efforts that are now connected with the college: undergraduate medical education; medical specialty and sub-specialty education; research; tertiary hospital care. Such an inquiry would also be particularly timely in the light of the looming reorganization and new leadership of the Memorial SKI complex.

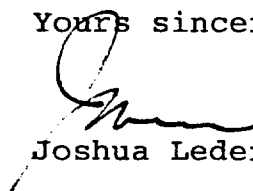
There are of course, arguments, pro and con, about the desirability and feasibility of conducting such a study before or after the recruitment of a Dean. If this can be done quickly and properly (and as I said this almost surely would then entail an inside choice) this inquiry could be defined as the major task of the recruited individual -- to be entered into before other, and possibly conflicting, long range commitments had been made for his own tenure.

There are, I believe, still very many resources that you can draw upon to help restore the aspirations and means for medical academic leadership, for which Cornell was at one time renowned. Above all, there are many alumni, as well as individuals presently associated with the college, who I am sure would be eager to help. Two people that come to my own mind immediately are Tom Meikle, (formerly Associate Dean) and Clayton Rich* who has just undertaken the Deanship at Oklahoma but is in a good position to draw upon his experience at Stanford.

The main point of this message is of course very simple, and that is that some priority be given to the organic charter of the institution at this stage of its development as a necessary precondition to a successful search.

Please hold these particular remarks as quite personal and confidential but do let me know if there is any other way in which I can be of help to you and your committee.

Yours sincerely,



Joshua Lederberg

*M.D. Cornell 1948
Dean at Stanford 1971-78

bcc:

Dr. Paul Marks
Dr. David Hamburg
Mr. John Sawyer
Mr. Rodney Nichols

with copy of Rhodes ltr. to J.L.