

August 30, 1955

Dr. Abraham White  
Associate Dean  
Albert Einstein College of Medicine  
New York 61, N.Y.

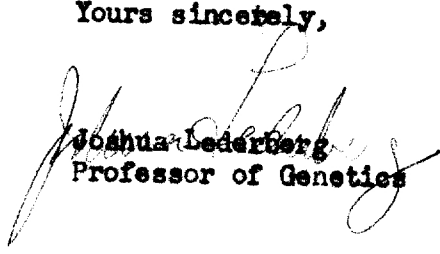
Dear Dr. White:

Thank you for your letter of the 18th. I can assure you I have given the matter the most careful thought. I am sorry to have to conclude that I am not yet ready to assume the very heavy administrative duties that would surely be connected with the chairmanship of a new department of medical microbiology. A number of well-informed people have advised me that under the optimal circumstances of a well established department of that size, these duties are an almost fatal distraction to research. It takes little perception to see that these would be redoubled during the first years of developing the department, its financial resources, its staff, its educational program and place in the college, and its research. I recognize the scope of the opportunity and the challenge, and am gratified that you would consider the possibility that I was qualified to meet it, but I hope to defer leaving the life of active research for at least a few years longer.

I am also uncertain whether research and administrative abilities are necessarily correlated. Perhaps a solution will someday be found to this problem that can conserve to the practise of science competent individuals whose careers are now almost inexorably impelled to administrative routine.

Under the circumstances, since you are looking for the chairman that I am not yet ready to be, it would be wasting your time and money for me to make a special trip. Please be sure of my sympathetic interest and best wishes for the success of your college. I hope we will have some chance to meet informally sometime so that I can reiterate them in person.

Yours sincerely,

  
Joshua Lederberg  
Professor of Genetics