

December 12, 1955

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

Dear Dr. White:

I hope that you will have achieved some progress in the development of your faculty since our earlier correspondence. But I hope I am not intruding too much in making the following suggestion, namely that you consider the establishment of a department of medical genetics. I do not know whether this possibility has already been considered. If so, you can simply ignore my remarks.

Judging from conversations I have had with people from several medical schools, genetics is going to be due for renewed emphasis in medical education and research. These discussions have led to some preoccupation on my part with this question. One of the problems seems to be in introducing a new discipline into an already rigidified curriculum and balance of departments. A new school would have the best opportunity to start from the beginning with a proper balance. Perhaps this is what you already had in mind in being willing to consider me for your microbiology department, though I did not so construe your remarks. At any rate, I have reached the conclusion that human genetics per se, with its usual concentration on statistical methodology is too narrow a channel for the very important part that genetics can, and is bound to, play in medicine in the years to come. For other purposes, I have prepared the briefs which are enclosed; I take the liberty of thrusting them on your own attention, but you can give them whatever consideration you care to.

Since your staff already includes Salome Maelsch, who is of course a geneticist of outstanding competence, I can be sure that genetics will not be ignored altogether in the development of your program. However, I believe that a case can be made for elevating genetics to the status of an independent science in medicine, on a par with physiology or biochemistry, and that it is likely to be underplayed unless it has that kind of recognition.

With best regards,

Yours sincerely,

Joshua Lederberg
Professor of Genetics

*see earlier re
Bart. Dept. proposals!*