

HARVARD UNIVERSITY  
THE BIOLOGICAL LABORATORIES  
16 DIVINITY AVENUE  
CAMBRIDGE 38, MASSACHUSETTS

February 28, 1957

Professor Joshua Lederberg  
Department of Genetics  
University of Wisconsin  
Madison, Wisconsin

Dear Lederberg:

This will put in writing the matters we discussed last night. The committee, of which I am a member, is unanimous in placing your name at the head of the list for appointment to a Full Professorship in the Department of Biology. The appointment could take effect from any agreed time. It would be a second appointment in Genetics, since an Associate Professor will be appointed to have primary charge of the undergraduate course. However, we do not envisage a Research Professorship since this has the undesirable effect of insulating a man somewhat from the normal running of the Department.

Other men in the Biology Department interested more or less peripherally in genetical problems and enthusiastic at the prospect that you might join us include Ernst Mayr, Paul Mangelsdorf, Paul Levine, Jim Watson and John Raper; there is also Paul Doty in the Chemistry Department. The possibilities of interaction and collaboration which might develop here are thus very favorable indeed. In addition, as you probably know, there is now a very strong biochemical group, including Edsall Bloch, Westheimer, Wald and myself, who administer advanced degrees in Biochemistry, and the recent appointment of Bernard Davis (still unofficial and confidential) to the chair of Bacteriology in the Medical School should strengthen this further.

The salaries which we discussed last night need not necessarily apply. It seems clear that the salary offered you would not necessarily be the beginning one for full professorships. This would be a matter for discussion with the Dean and President and I know that Dean Bundy is enthusiastic at the prospect and will do all he can to interest you.

Among the things which Harvard can offer, which I feel is not common to most universities, is the quality of the graduate students. Over a period of years we have succeeded

in attracting an unusually competent group of young men and this is one of the things which give so much pleasure to life here. Cambridge is a pleasant place to live and there is an exceptionally large amount of music going on; the Boston Symphony plays a short series of concerts right in Harvard University, there are a large number of concerts by the Glee Club, the University Orchestra and innumerable chamber music groups. Boston is a moderate-size city at a convenient distance away and for transportation we are rather well situated.

It was very nice of you to offer to make your itinerary available to me because I still hope that we might arrange to meet somehow before too long. I would be very happy to drop down to New York, for instance, to talk with you on your return from England before you go west again. I hope, too, that, if any questions occur to you, you would not hesitate to drop me a line. We do think that the post here is an attractive one and I would like to feel that you do not commit yourself to any irrevocable move before we have had a chance to talk it over.

Wishing you a good trip,

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Yours sincerely,



Kenneth V. Thimann  
Professor of Biology

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