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Department of Medical Genetics

April 29, 1957

Dr. James D. Watson
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Cambridge 38, Mass.

Dear Jim:

I wish I had time to write each one of my friends at Harvard, who wished me so well during the past few months. In place of that, I'd like to rely on you to pass the word, especially as I have been getting back inaccurate rumors as to my reasons for withdrawing from availability for the Harvard Biology professorship.

We both know that there were some feelers several years ago, and I think I could have been forgiven for some impatience that they dragged out without materializing. However, it is quite true that my indicated requirements were on the exorbitant side, and I have been learning a great deal lately in connection with the organization of the new Medical Genetics department on how long it does take to process appointments, even when all the winds are favorable. I did tell Paul Doty in connection with Paul Levine that I thought Harvard might be the better for some more resoluteness; that was some time ago. That was behind some of my feeling that I wanted to have a green light from the Harvard administration before there was much point in further discussion. But what I heard from Dean Bundy and George Wald and others was more than satisfactory in this respect. What I hope no one misunderstands is that my own thinking about Harvard has been from a completely fresh approach, and I had only to look at the people I like and admire there to have cause to regret that other factors predominated.

Right now, I am too tied up with the developments in the medical school here to want to be involved in any more negotiations elsewhere than I am already. In any event, for reasons which are no discredit to either of two great institutions, we have decided that on balance we would prefer to remain at Madison for the present rather than move to Cambridge. I would rather not be pressed into going into more detail, if only because some of the ultimate considerations (if we knew what they were) might seem rather trivial. In the end, Harvard and Wisconsin are probably both grand places to be and to work; here is where we happen to be now. But it would make us very unhappy if the false impression were broadcast that this decision were based on any reflection of past history. Your own presence, and from what I hear, thriving success would be enough sign of a new ~~new~~ era at Harvard, if any were needed.

My only cause for concern now that that I may have been to be protesting too much, so I will end right here,

With best wishes,

Joseph Lederberg