

January 29, 1957

Dr. J. A. Jenkins
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Dear Jim:

Thank you for your last of the 24th. I am pleased to see how you are guiding matters to a conclusion. The proposal now pending as to Esther's status is by far the best approach, by being so direct, if it will go.

What you have already told me about departmental facilities in Giannini speaks for some changes in the plans. But as I wrote, these should furnish a reasonable basis for cost estimates. Since then, I have had a look at the construction in the new wing of the Biochemistry Building here, which is representative of the best of new construction here. I was impressed by the effective use that was made of such features as a) Unistrut framing, for flexibility in wall and bench arrangements, and b) ceramic tile [my earlier objection to this was based on imagined problems of wall-mountings]. Now of course I don't know how far U/C wants to go in rehabilitation of an older building, but I hope you will at least make a bid for consideration of the best current practice.

April would be the strategic time to discuss the preliminary actual plans. In addition to the utility details I asked about earlier, it would be helpful if I could know (as best you do) the larger plans for the building, viz. who my neighbors would be in the interim, and more exactly the disposition of Genetics after the move. Has the question of space been attacked from the most fundamental standpoint? [You will shudder to read this after the legwork you must have done to secure 22-23! But I would just ask if this does represent the only practical arrangement you can envisage. There would be both economies and conveniences if we were all on the same floor, and I have to admit that street-level represents a second-best for microbiological work on account of dust etc. I want and have to rely on your judgment about this-- perhaps it is already implicit.]

This raises a question of dates. We are flying back from London March 31/ April 1, and want a day or two in the New York area. It would be a physical possibility for me to fly direct from N.Y. to San Francisco, but I suspect my wits would still be floating somewhere near Chicago. ~~The best Thursday~~ date would be, I think, April 12, but I assume you would have mentioned this if it were open. If that is right, April 16-17 [for the scheduled talks] would be next best. This leaves only about 6 weeks before my next fly-through, but if your B's and G's department is reasonably efficient, there should have been enough work on the plans to make a semi-final discussion profitable at that time. So perhaps we should confirm those dates (16-17).

There is one other matter, which has no immediate application, but which I would like to take this chance to 'write into the record'. This is simply that I have an interest in medical genetics, (as a broad discipline which relates not only to human genetics, but to experimental mammalian and microbial studies which bear on medicine). This perhaps stems from my early training in medical school.

Genetics within

My place in/the College of Agriculture here has always been directed to fundamental research and teaching therein, and I am relying on the assumption that this would be no less true at California. There has, at the same time, been no discouragement of my potential interests in medicine, though these have not until recently been related to any working programs. During the past twelve months, however, I have been discussing various possibilities in more and more detail with various of my colleagues, especially Dean Bowers of the Medical School. At the present time, a faculty committee is about to discuss a concrete proposal for the creation of a separate, small Department of Medical Genetics. My leadership of this program would be compatible with my continued tenure in this Department (Genetics) as well. We have a remarkable opportunity at Wisconsin because of the existing strength of the Genetics Department, the proximity and interest of the medical school, and the traditional, cordial relationships between the respective colleges, and especially the renewed emphasis on fundamental research in medical sciences which has accompanied Dean Bowers' appointment. Of course, I cannot predict the final outcome of these discussions. I am trying to keep separate the important principle of such a basic medical-science department from the question of my personal availability, but the two issues do tend to merge.

Now, I should emphasize that my primary concern is for the research program in pure genetics, which you know me for. This program is a broader interest, one that I hope succeeds in one form or another, and with or without me. It represents just one of a number of such 'organizational' enterprises that I might plump for. (In fact, I am a little concerned that it might (have) entangled me prematurely and a little too deeply in administrative diversions.) My first and principal concern at Berkeley too would be that research, and I recognize that many local features make just such a program in medical genetics an unlikely development for the time being. If, however, the maturation of long term plans should lead to a change in outlook, I hope my interest in this field will be a matter of record. There are, of course, many groups at Berkeley who have similar or related interests, and effective cooperation with them ought to be a more effective testimonial than this paper.

Yours sincerely,

Joshua Lederberg
Professor of Genetics