

JL

March 15, 1958

Dear Jim:

Just received your note of the 13th. I was rather astonished that a reversal as decisive as this would be possible at such a late stage, and needless to say we are disappointed. But the most urgent thing I wanted to communicate was our very deep appreciation for your own efforts-- I know that the whole affair must have been as wearing for you as it has been for us, and that no part of this denouement stems from any omission on your part.

I am pleased that we could, at least, have learned of this development before we had gone too far in predicating our plans here on the prospect of moving. So far, we have done nothing irrevocable --beyond, for example, retrenching on students who might have been embarrassed by having to move in mid-course, and some hesitations on building and financial plans which might have been made up. Also, I would not want you to have any pangs about the influence our negotiations have had on decisions with respect to other institutions: I can't begin to judge whether they would have been different, but I was the first to insist that there was no contract until it had been formally accepted on both sides.

However, I am going to toss one ball back to you. I would ask you to base your department's policy on whether to prolong the discussion entirely on your own judgment of its practicality. I am deeply interested in Berkeley and would be in the future; if you feel that there is any point in exploring other arrangements during the next year or two (including some along the interdepartmental lines to which I alluded in my last letter) there would certainly be nothing unfair to us in your doing so. Nor do I think that much of the time we spent on these matters has been entirely wasted. On the other hand, I can very well visualize that your department may feel that this would be a futile effort, and that it would be better to proceed with more likely successful proposals, for the use of your appointment commitments. Perhaps on a longer scale, the two would not be entirely exclusive. At any rate, it is in my interest that I suggest you base your decisions on policy objectives rather than on the premise 'that it would be completely unfair to continue negotiations.'

As a practical matter, of course, we will have to accommodate our plans to the proposition that we are not moving to Berkeley. Let me repeat that we certainly place great store on the opportunity that the past year has afforded for getting to know you and your colleagues more intimately, and I want to wish you the very best of luck in your further plans.

With best regards from Esther,

Yours cordially,  
Joshua Lederberg