

July 2, 1956

Dr. M. R. Irwin
Chairman, Department of Genetics

Dear Bob:

I attach herewith requests for leave for the periods July 8 to July 14, 1956, and for July 14 to July 28. The second interval is primarily for vacation purposes, and is not concerned with the following comment.

As you know, research workers are finding it more and more necessary to consult with one another by conferences, symposia and similar meetings. From time to time, we have attended such meetings on University expense accounts; naturally we try to be as thrifty as possible with University funds. For this reason, I have often made similar trips at my own expense when I could travel by car, or with a group of people, or could take advantage of personal hospitality in place of expensive hotels. Furthermore, it has sometimes been possible to take advantage of funds available to the organizers of the conferences.

Robert E. Wright's experience last spring points, however, to a potential danger in these economies. He was involved in an automobile accident while returning from a visit to another laboratory, but he was not on a formal expense account, having gone at my own urging, and knowing that he could get accommodations en route and at his destination free of personal cost. His hospital expenses were enormous. When he applied for compensation for these from the State Industrial Commission he found, as might be expected, that the State adopted a rather legalistic attitude with regard to the formal obligations of the University. I was mainly impressed that the University itself was not a party to these hearings, that its own good intentions (ex post facto) would have no bearing on such claims. Wright's claim was eventually declined though only partly on these grounds, partly on the fact that he was about 4 miles off the principal route at the time of the accident.

It seems to me very important therefore that the University clarify its contractual obligations to its officers when they are engaged in what I believe is construed as their official duties. For that reason, I am asking that Dean Proker affirm the University's recognition of this position by some phrase such as is typed on the card—undoubtedly a legal expert should be consulted as to the best form. If this is not the University's position, the phrase may be stricken. I also request that the administration make a more general announcement of its legal obligations in the event of accidents, so that faculty members may know whether they should file expense accounts for any trip, whether they have no backing at all, or whether they can safely economize on University travel funds and still be covered.

Yours sincerely,

Joshua Lederberg