

STANFORD UNIVERSITY MEDICAL CENTER

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STANFORD UNIVERSITY SCHOOL OF MEDICINE
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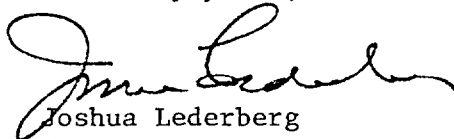
Dr. Robert McGinnis
National Science Foundation
Washington, D.C. 20550

Dear Dr. McGinnis,

I was sitting next to Kingsley Davis the other day, and he mentioned to me that you had been working on longitudinal studies of career structures in science. For some time I have been trying to get the point across to people like Dr. Robert Glaser for the NRC studies on biomedical research manpower, and to Dr. David Hamburg and the Institute of Medicine, that we needed to think about manpower requirements in precisely these terms rather than the enumeration of the number of slots that will be funded by the federal government in different disciplines. Until now, the only interesting discussion of these issues that I have encountered, is the paper by Merton and Zuckerman in the Aging monographs sponsored by Russell Sage. In the light of the rather pointed statements that are coming out now from Dr. Atkinson and Dr. Press about the need to find new ways for placing younger people in the scientific system, it seems to me that there is all the more need for a fundamental reexamination. One doesn't have to look far to see how the project system provides what might be distorting incentives to continue the "overproduction" of Ph.D.'s - since the graduate student under our existing framework is the only reputable situs of people whose research can be managed. But of course the byproduct of that system is the generation of new entrepreneurs, and so we have a Malthusian pattern.

Well I don't know if this is what you have been attending to, but I would be most interested to know of any work you are doing or of which you may be aware that could help address these structural problems.

Sincerely yours,


Joshua Lederberg
Professor of Genetics

cc: Sarah Brown, IOM