

*Genetics  
misc*

January 19, 1953

9/1/115-3

Box 25

Dean R. K. Froker  
Agricultural Hall

Dear Dean Froker:

I wish to call to your attention what in my opinion is a very serious situation presently confronting this Department. You are well aware that the needs for additional space within the institution in general have been critical during these past few years, and that the Department of Genetics has been one of those for which relief from crowded conditions has been urgently needed. The members of the departmental staff have been reconciled in the past to operating in these cramped quarters since it was hoped that the rooms in the Genetics Building previously occupied by the Department of Veterinary Science would be made ready for occupancy shortly after the latter Department had moved to its new location. The Department of Veterinary Science moved early in December, 1952, but a new and highly disturbing element has entered the picture, since, as I have been informed, no funds are available for either (a) remodelling the building as was first outlined in a letter to you from Professor R. A. Brink on October 30, 1950, and requested again by the undersigned on August 6, 1952, or (b) the purchase of the laboratory furniture needed.

In other words, the rooms for the use of various members of the Department are now empty (or are fitted for occupancy on a makeshift basis), but progress on the plans for necessary remodelling seemingly has come almost to a standstill, and the morale of the staff members who desperately need this additional space is not improving, to say the least.

The most critical need in remodelling the Genetics Building is to provide additional laboratory space, primarily for Professors R. A. Brink, J. F. Crow, J. Lederberg and W. K. Smith. I wish to call your attention particularly to the most serious situation regarding laboratory space, namely, that of Associate Professor Joshua Lederberg. You will recall that at the time Professor Lederberg declined an offer from the University of Chicago in January 1950, an understanding was arrived at between the Department of Genetics and yourself in regard to alleviating the crowded conditions in his laboratory at the earliest possible moment. This understanding was stated in Professor Brink's letter to you of January 9, 1950, following his previous letter to you of December 9, 1949, in which were outlined in detail specific needs to provide additional space for Lederberg's laboratory. Briefly, the primary requirements are (1) to insulate the roof and install ceiling in the laboratory rooms, (2) to provide adequate ventilation and cooling for the laboratory, and (3) to provide means of abating the excessive amount of dust which is distributed throughout the building. These are needs not only for Lederberg's laboratory, but for the other rooms on the second floor as well (except for the item of cooling), and it therefore seems very inadvisable to me to consider remodelling only that part of the upper floor allocated for use as a laboratory by Lederberg. The remodelling of the building needs to be considered as a unit.

In my opinion, the need to make a definite start now to provide this additional laboratory space is urgent. Professor Lederberg's stature as a promising young scientist has increased markedly since he was offered the position at the University of Chicago in January 1950, and it is important that the University clearly recognize this fact and make every effort to provide him with an opportunity commensurate with his potentialities. Otherwise, the next attractive offer which is made to him by another institution might find him in a receptive mood. This is a situation which the University should make every effort to avoid. I hardly need to add that Lederberg's laboratory is now badly overcrowded, and in the summer time is often unusable because of excessive heat on the top floor.

In essence, then, I am asking (1) that estimates be provided at the earliest possible date for the cost of the proposed remodelling in the Genetics Building and (2) that funds be found for the completion of this remodelling and for the purchase of the necessary laboratory furniture so that the laboratories can be equipped without undue delay.

Very truly yours,

  
M. A. Irwin  
Professor of Genetics