

Nov 23 1958

Memo: To Dean Alway

In a recent letter you referred to advancing the formalities of my appointment in the Department of Biological Sciences as a mechanism to allow a Ph.D. offering in Genetics. I am sorry that there can be any misunderstanding about such a question at this date, my own belief having been that this issue, if ever there was one, had been settled long since. I hope that this is purely a verbal slip; I would strenuously resist such an interpretation of the responsibilities of the Genetics Department among which graduate research and training are preeminent.

*sent ✓*

I realize that the organization of the Graduate School is in a state of flux, and I have taken this circumstance as the reason why university policies on the administration of graduate degrees have not been explicitly stated. However, I can hardly interpret the mandate to organize a Department of Genetics on the assumption that its responsibilities and prerogatives in establishing a Ph.D. program would be any less than those inherent in the other science departments of the medical school — e.g. Physiology, Anatomy, Medical Microbiology, Biochemistry, etc. Genetics should, of course, have its program subject to the same review by an all-university Graduate authority as applies to the other departments.

Of course, I am most eager to maintain a close liaison with Biology and more particularly with Yanofsky, Perkins, Grebstein, Twitty and others whose scientific interests impinge so directly on genetics. One method of doing this is my joint appointment in Biology, and I would welcome the opportunity of lending my own weight to maintaining and improving its strength as a general biology department. I have also indicated my hopes of having advice from these colleagues and the possibility, in due course, of reciprocating the courtesy of the joint appointment if there is any benefit to be gained from this. However, I have viewed this as an altogether separate question from the academic responsibilities of the Genetics Department.

This is a question of principle, but it has a number of practical aspects as well. Undoubtedly many students will have their basic qualifications in General Biology, and for these the standards and preliminary examination of the Biology Department would be most appropriate. However, we are planning to recruit graduate students from diverse areas, possibly ranging over biophysics, biochemistry, microbiology, medicine, perhaps even pure chemistry and physics and to meet such a diversity of needs I would insist that Genetics be free to set its own standards within the framework of university policy. I have particularly in mind the M.D. or the junior medical student who has gone through BMS and wants to work concurrently for the M.D. and Ph.D.

I might add an expression of confidence in the present leadership of Biology, but the very wide heterogeneity of interests and talents in that Department leaves open the possibility of future mischief. I am anxious to maintain friendly cooperation with Biology, but the administrative subordination of The Genetics Department to it in such matters as the graduate degree, admissions, fellowships and so on would be inconsistent with my understanding of my functions as executive. I am sure it would never occur to your other basic science departments that they were liable to any comparable deviation of responsibility.

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Arthur Kornberg has told me of the plan to list Biochemistry as a separate department in the School of Humanities and Sciences; I had not however thought of this as an alternative mechanism for the Ph.D. degree. I can see no reason to complicate the administrative responsibilities of Genetics in the same way, as we are not planning to offer undergraduate courses (and such as might be open to B.A. candidates are as easily listed under Biology). Assuming that HAS is not the custodian of the Ph.D. degree, I would assume that Genetics could perform its graduate functions as a department of the medical school without further ado. Over and above this I would still welcome the personal appointment in Biology.

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PS: Is there any problem at all— The School of Medicine Bulletin for 1958-59 reads: pp. 128-129 "The departments of the school of medicine are considered as equivalent to other departments of the University in respect of candidacy and requirements for the degrees of Master of Arts and Doctor of Philosophy, and the same regulations are in force...." I would assume such a statement has a 'statutory' basis.

My only concern in writing at such length is to caution against dealings with Biology that would leave any room for ambiguity— I may not have had an opportunity to stress the importance of this issue in earlier conversation.

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I hope this is much ado about nothing, but it would be a frightfully poor start to have an unresolved misunderstanding about it! If you feel it wise to do so, I have no objection to your circulating this letter— my own feeling is that the autonomy of Genetics should be taken for granted, and ought never to be associated with the issue of the joint appointment. If by some quirk, Genetics had to affiliate with HAS for the Ph.D., I would have to ask that it be as a separate Department — but I can see no reason to bring this up otherwise.