

DATE: 21 August 1972

TO : Clayton Rich
Dean, Medical School

FROM : Joshua Lederberg
Department of Genetics

SUBJECT: Genetics Department Space

Dear Clay:

I have wanted to set these thoughts down on paper for some time; another occasion was provided by Eric Shooter's quoting a remark you made (during discussions of Anatomy space needs) about Genetics space. I am confident you did not intend to be critical in any way, but potential sore points ought to be clarified before they generate widespread misunderstanding.

It concerned the "abundance" of space available to Genetics Faculty, and numbers like "3000 ft² per faculty". This hardly jibes with the self-perception of my departmental colleagues, nor with what you will see if you walk through our department. You will not find any idle space in our labs - in contrast to what I could show you elsewhere in the school. The department does not even have room for its own conference room (except for S047, in the basement).

There are three reasons for the apparent discrepancy:

(1) A large part of our space is the IRL, which provides a sophisticated support function for the department (an)on occasion for school-wide functions like ACME and for other departments ad hoc). The IRL has an "infinity" of space per faculty member (unless you count Elliott Levinthal, a Senior Research Associate). (So does the Dean's Office).

The special circumstances of IRL were of course recognized in its initial construction funding; it was paid for approximately 120%, in effect, by the grants from NASA and from the Kennedy Foundation.

(2) We could improve our "index of space" by redesignating a number of people as faculty rather than research associates. I have been reluctant to press for implicit burdens on the school's tenure obligations for other than our most broadly qualified teacher-scholars. But I may have already leaned over backward to discourage faculty status for Levinthal, Duffield, Rindfleisch and several others.

(3) You cannot ignore another index, productivity per faculty, or per unit of space, as you wish. One measure of this is research grant funds per faculty member which I am sure is well above the school average;

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TO : Dr. Rich

FROM : Dr. Lederberg

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Or funds per ft² of space (or its corollary, working people per ft²) which I believe are highly competitive. On the other hand, I believe our budget of unrestricted funds per faculty is relatively low. I realize how easy it is to be self-deluded about such an issue, but I suspect that Genetics may be the only department in the school that actually earns a profit, via indirect cost recovery, compared to indirect cost expense plus unrestricted direct costs. If not, we come very close.

In contrasting our space availability to other departments, I believe you should also consider that bed space is not charged to the account of clinicians who do a substantial part of their work outside the lab.

I do not believe we are luxuriously endowed, quite apart from having earned our space by personal fund-raising efforts. I do submit that we have developed a number of programs, which make efficient and necessary use of the space we have. In this light, the basic issue is the value of these programs to the school - compared to other options and in the light of what our efforts bring to the total environment and also of the latent costs, either of sustaining or of diminishing them.

Perhaps I am being too defensive about the possibility that casual banter, without deeper explication, may unduly influence your own basic thinking and arouse misunderstanding and unjustified envy on the part of others. Or, I may be responding to a non-event; but, I welcome an opportunity to put this on the record to you.