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KENMORE 6-8600

January 6, 1956

Dr. Joshua Lederberg
Univ. of Wisconsin
College of Agriculture
Madison 6, Wisconsin

Dear Doctor Lederberg:

Thank you for your thoughtful reply to my letter. I shall try to grapple with the difficult questions you pose with respect to stimuli to investigation at Harvard. As you may know, I am not an alumnus of Harvard and so my observations are not the intimate ones of a student.

Statistically, about half of Harvard Medical School graduates hold academic positions, and about half of these, in turn, are full-time. This probably reflects the unusually fine applicant group, as well as the influence of the school. The general emphasis is on intellectual and social alertness. About one-third of the students carry on some type of investigation during their schooling. There is some free time for this (the curriculum is less rigid than in many places) and a really good student can devote a great deal of time to investigation if his desires are strong in this direction. Eventually, of course, a medical school must train physicians, and there should be room for all kinds. One of the difficult problems is to achieve proper balance.

Whether a given student prefers medical training to graduate school training is, in my mind, more a function of whether he intends to work with man and with problems of man. Even this is not a hard criterion but for those with little enthusiasm for concentrating on man as a focus for investigation, medical training would seem to be a waste.

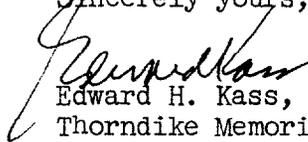
There is every precedent here for the development of research interests, as you are well aware, and if Frank is as good as all this, he will find the doors wide open. For example, many of us regularly take on undergraduate students for summer work at whatever salary is prevalent. In addition there are many organized means for recognizing student research throughout the structure of the school - more, I might add, than I have seen at any other schools that I have dealt with.

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The problem with Frank, as I see it, is not whether he will be divided between investigation and practice - this is a perennial problem, and each solves it in his own way. It is whether Frank is a sufficiently promising man to warrant his coming here, and whether his interest in the biology of man is great enough to make medical rather than graduate basic science training the most desirable solution for him. I have no fears that a promising investigator will be thwarted here.

This is a poor answer, as I look it over, but a more complete one will probably have to await our getting together sometime and discussing it further. In the meantime, my great thanks for your time and interest. I shall relay your thoughts to the Committee and I hope Frank makes the grade.

Sincerely yours,



Edward H. Kass, M.D., Ph.D.
Thorndike Memorial Laboratory

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