

October 17, 1958

Dr. Hideo Kikkawa  
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Osaka, Japan

Dear Professor Kikkawa:

I am very sorry that events precluded an opportunity for us to meet during your recent visit to the United States. Also, I should certainly have written you sooner concerning the excellent progress that Mr. Hirota has been making in this laboratory, and I can assure you that only the preoccupation with other duties, some of them connected with my impending move to Stanford University, have prevented me from doing this.

You may be aware that Mr. Hirota is feeling some sense of insecurity with respect to his position and that this is leading him to consider the possibility of terminating his studies prematurely in order to take a position with Dr. Iseki. I am encouraging Mr. Hirota to continue with his original plans, not primarily as a matter of fulfilling a previously expressed obligation, but for the benefit of his own career. He really is a remarkable student and potential independent research worker, and I have been more than delighted to have him in my laboratory. He has been making excellent progress in his studies of the effects of acriflavine on the F system of *Escherichia coli*. I feel that in the course of the next two years or so that would be necessary for him to complete the formalities for a Ph.D. degree he has the opportunity to acquire an international reputation in this field, and furthermore to obtain a working familiarity with the concepts, literature, and personalities in microbial genetics in the English speaking world. I feel that our move to Stanford University, which will take place on February 1, to a new department of genetics in the medical school, has an unusual opportunity for further development especially along biochemical lines on account of our association with Professor Kornberg in the Department of Biochemistry.

I am sure that part of Mr. Hirota's insecurity was based on financial uncertainty, the question as to how he would be able to pay the debts he had contracted in order to travel to the United States. It seems to me that his problem in this respect could only be seriously aggravated by a decision to leave prematurely and on the other hand I have given him what I trust will be very ample assurances for his financial security during the remaining years of his connection with my laboratory. I believe that he was under some misapprehension concerning his liability for extra costs of tuition at Stanford University and I have been able to reassure him on this point, very recently, that this would be taken care of in calculating his stipend.

The chief question that must remain in his mind is whether he should abandon excellent future prospects in order to grasp at a present opportunity and this will be based on his judgment of the extent of those prospects. I am sure that he will rely strongly on your judgement as to what his ultimate opportunities would be if he were to return to Japan after an interval of another two years or so

on the completion of his research studies here. For the very sake of Japanese science I can only hope that his opportunities would be commensurate with his very high and demonstrated ability.

In any event I must express my gratitude for your having sent him here as he has been a pleasure to have as a student, an associate, and a friend.

Yours sincerely,

Joshua Lederberg  
Professor of Medical Genetics