

*send a copy  
to Dr. Heath*

November 12, 1969

Dr. W. Barry Wood, Jr., Director  
Department of Microbiology

Dear Barry:

I want to record in this letter my concern regarding the proposed program in Allied Health Sciences at Johns Hopkins contained in Lincoln Gordon's letter of October 13, 1969. In my opinion, if the program outlined by Mr. Gordon is adopted, the primary role of the School of Medicine as an institution devoted to training students and advancing knowledge in medicine and biomedical sciences is bound to suffer. The essential fault in the proposal, I believe, is the direct involvement of the Medical School departments and faculty in the program.

Having stated my conclusion, let me comment in more detail. If the School of Medicine is assigned a "basic responsibility" for the "academic aspects" of the program (with "the faculty ... based mainly in the appropriate departments of the Schools of Medicine and Hygiene"), either new faculty would be appointed to discharge this responsibility or the present faculty would need to take it on. Either solution would be harmful. Our present faculty is an outstanding one, highly trained to work at the frontiers of their respective fields and to offer rather advanced courses in areas of their interests to outstanding students. The chances are therefore very slim that any member of our department would willingly take on the job of teaching students of nursing, laboratory medicine, and mental health sciences; he would not feel that his training and talents were being well used. If new faculty were hired for the purpose of training allied health professionals, our department would then have two distinct staffs, with widely divergent values, training, and aims, and the cohesiveness of the department, which is dependent on shared academic values and purpose, would be lost. I believe such a development would make the department far less attractive to the imaginative, productive investigator and teacher whom we all value, with consequent jeopardy to our primary function.

In a broader context, I view Mr. Gordon's proposal and the enthusiastic support of it by some of our clinical faculty and

administration, as a sign that the present pressure on the Medical School and Hospital has caused many to lose sight of certain fundamentals. Medicine is based on the biomedical sciences, therefore sound training in biomedical science is important for medical students. Frightfully little is known about the most serious and widespread diseases, and the modes of effective treatment available are very few indeed. Therefore, biomedical research is important, and we do need an environment where creative investigators can work and train others. These functions of the Medical School (especially Johns Hopkins Medical School) are not secondary, expendable ones and should not be neglected in response to social pressures.

All this is not to say that Johns Hopkins ought to be aloof from the pressing needs for medical care and for personnel involved in delivering such care. I do not question that a serious problem exists in the delivery of health care and that Hopkins should help solve this problem. But to do so at the expense of what is unique in Hopkins' contribution to health seems to me shortsighted. Would it not be possible to develop the Allied Health Science program in an entirely separate School of the Medical Institutions, closely tied to the Hospital? Or if a trial period were considered necessary before establishing the School, would it not be possible to develop programs between local colleges and Hopkins Hospital? I realize that these approaches have probably been explored, but I feel that the committee may have taken what looked like the easiest course, i.e., assigning responsibility to the Schools of Medicine and Hygiene, with insufficient concern for the consequences.

I would appreciate your forwarding a copy of this letter to Dave Rogers.

Sincerely,

Daniel Nathans

DN/ts