



UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA
TWIN CITIES

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School of Public Health
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HB

18 April 1978

*personal
file SPH
(not sent.)*

MEMORANDUM (Personal and Confidential)

TO: Dean Lee Stauffer
FROM: H. Blackburn
RE: Miscellany

Thanks for your mention of the "perception" of the Laboratory "gobbling up" things. I suppose my memo on the future of epidemiology will not soften that perception. However, if that perception comes from Health Education and/or Health Nutrition or elsewhere, I hope that you might challenge it clearly and set the picture straight.

First, we did not ask for those programs. We did not want them. And we are not all that prepared to administer them in their current form. Secondly, if we had wanted to "gobble them up," within 24 hours after the administrative arrangements I would have been over engineering departmental meetings and "managing" them. Third, my policy of relationships, allowing individuals to develop their lines within the Lab counters the idea. And finally, which I believe that people with this perception should be particularly challenged on from your level, is their failure to recognize the opportunity they have to collaborate with a group of active and fairly "hard" scientists interested in public health and sympathetic to their efforts - and to exploit and utilize their skills in developing their own programs - instead of having peculiar "perceptions" of (a) not wanting to be gobbled up when no one is nibbling and (b) "it being hard to break into" the laboratory. Sometimes people can be helped by challenging their rationalizations and contradictions.

Speaking of "gobbling up," with respect to my letter and our past discussions on epidemiology, we are increasingly interested that the skills among 5 of us on our staff, internationally recognized in epidemiology, along with formal training of 4 of the staff in epidemiology should have opportunity to recruit and advise students in this discipline in which we are qualified. It is becoming increasingly difficult for us to live with the illogic of not having joint appointments and not being able to offer joint Ph.D.'s in epidemiology with the EPI program. I and my faculty are regularly discussing the future of training efforts in the lab and I'm hopeful that we can hold off until the change of management in epidemiology. At that time, I would hope a minimum condition for the EPI administration will be for us to have joint appointments

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and work with them in producing Ph.D.'s and giving degrees based on research in our field with the basic preparation jointly developed with the epidemiology program. I guess I would like to sound you out on your present thinking about that and how you see things moving forward. I may take steps sooner with Len but need your support. I would also like to explore our establishing our epidemiology credentials with the Graduate School, though obviously we could not accept students if EPI didn't agree.

Another note is to let you know that the head of the Search Committee for the new Health Education position has not consulted the Division Head. I would like to call on us to establish a series of guidelines (a start is attached) for search committees for the School of Public Health. The function in this area is becoming close to blundering in my view and is hurting the school in my opinion. The principal opportunity we have as administrators to strengthen divisions is in these appointments. When neither the Dean nor the Division Head are consulted on their views and needs for these fields and the appointments, other than the brief job descriptions, a Search Committee, in my opinion, is grossly unprepared to deal with the recruiting and evaluating candidates. I would be happy to participate in making a checklist of guidelines for Search Committee's function and I feel a sense of urgency about this. The anachronism of the Search Committee for Nutrition recommending that the appointments now be closed because there would be a "stigma" on the position at Minnesota if further delay should occur in making an appointment - when they are largely responsible for that situation - makes the urgency of our considerations the greater.

Back to the situation of the present composition of the Division of Health and Human Behavior, I believe that we should have more discussions about it. As far as I'm concerned, if I am to head this Division, it will to some extent take on the thrust and color of our interests. If it is not to do this and if we disagree on the challenge and the need for considerable reorganization of these two programs, and if I am not free to pursue the improvement or new directions in those programs, and to evaluate them based on what we can learn by looking at other programs about the country, then I think we would all be more comfortable if there were some reorganization. None of this prevents the School from continuing to have effective teaching programs for those students in the area as it is now constituted. It has a great deal to do with taking a hard look at those areas, and getting outside advice and planning for the future of those areas rather than accepting the status quo.

With respect to Art Leon posing his candidacy, I've indicated to him that we will decide in the next days whether he should pose it. I have asked him to prepare a statement on the challenge and opportunities of Public Health Nutrition, how he would see the program developing in Minnesota and the series of details on his relationship with the present program and its staff, focusing his energies, on giving up other activities and his responses to questions posed by the existing search committee for that position. I am involved in an all-day meeting with Kjelsberg on Thursday and am out of town on Friday. I'm hoping we can decide which direction we should take after our budget meeting on Tuesday. I was a little surprised to find that Bob was taking an active role in discussing this with Art and others, when in theory, and in fact, we agreed to make our decision on this on Tuesday, the 18th. It's hard to suppress a rumor, but your office's activity changes the color of the "commitment."

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Back to the LPH "perception" issue, which I want to think about. It would be awfully helpful if you would help me work out some of the issues that may have led to this "perception" of the Laboratory. This, in Dr. Leon's terms, resulted in negative votes for Dr. Bradfield simply because one of his primary interests in coming to Minnesota was "to be involved with the Laboratory." If this is really the view of our colleagues in the School, we have several alternatives. One, attempt to mollify that view with your help, with conversations and explanations and presentations and other means. Two, acting the part that we are perceived to be and taking a much more active role in working with you and the other Division Directors to strengthen the programs that are recognizably weak and to administer the ones assigned to us which are now administered by you. Three, get out of an area we can't mold or direct (or don't understand).

I really feel that we are coming up on a period of replacement of program heads in which the School of Public Health can make its most significant step forward. We should not lose this moment when we are both at the height of our abilities to help that process. I guess I am not impressed that the Division Head meetings or the Blue Sky Reports are representing any significant interaction or the intellectual exchange that is needed for vigorous planning and development for the school.

I realize that our internal "problems" with Nutrition, Education and Epidemiology require my direct activity with the parties concerned - not so much yours. But I want to see how you feel before I try to convince them of the advantages of our greater collaboration.

HB:lgr
Attachment

GUIDELINES TO SEARCH COMMITTEES

1. Program and Division Head produce job description, edited by Dean.
2. Program and Division Head charged to recommend persons and institutions for contacts.
3. Program and Division Head requested to make personal contacts desired as soon as position is announced.
4. Program and Division Head invited to present views on desired characteristics of applicants and their views of where the program is going.
5. Program and Division Heads advised of limits to their function in recruitment and selection process.
6. Division Head asked to make personal invitations to those selected for interview, set up seminars if appropriate, and aid Search Committee to prepare interviews and schedules for visit.
7. Division Head and Dean make decision on recommended candidates. Contingencies listed when there is disagreement.

HB:lgr
4/17/78