



UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA
TWIN CITIES

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April 11, 1990

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Leonard Kuki
Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs
and Provost for Twin Cities Campus
213 Morrill Hall

re: Division of Epidemiology Update 1990

Dear Colleague:

I have enjoyed our several contacts since your arrival and have appreciated the forthright way you have approached several key problems on campus. I thought you might be interested to peruse the enclosed and perhaps keep it as a reference.

You have been quoted on several remarks, and one you made on your visit with the President to the School of Public Health faculty, along the line of "rampant democracy" in the pursuit of research and the obvious difficulty of the University to respond to all the needs created by the growing research effort. I wonder, therefore, if you might think it useful to have some open discussions with health sciences and to visit its research institutions and undertakings for long-term understanding and planning?

In regard to research as "risk taking," the main issue is probably track record. Though academic institutions are fragile, the track record of a unit is important. Certainly the School of Public Health and our unit, Epidemiology, has a strong record of self support, effective competition and innovation, and steady, "reasonable" growth.

In respect to relative balance between research and teaching, it would be useful for you to know how well integrated are teaching and advising experience in a division such as ours, with 34 doctoral candidates, virtually all of whom are doing their research on Division-based projects, and being supported by Division grants. This seems to us the very best way to balance and integrate those two major University functions.

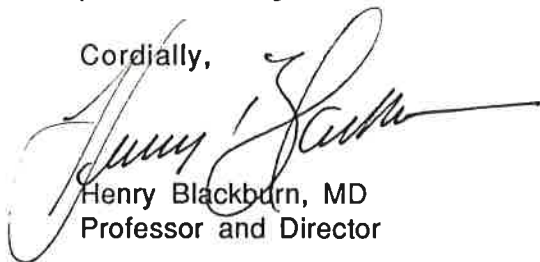
Finally, in respect to the overall strength of the University, we all need to be aware of the strength derived by the particular nature of epidemiological, prevention and public health research. It is not carried out in an ivory tower. Rather it reaches out to tens, in fact hundreds of thousands of citizens in the upper midwest. Public health and preventive epidemiological research uses whole populations as the unit of analysis, not individuals (or molecules!) Thus, even in something as simple as a health survey, we touch tens of thousands of people. In more complex projects we use randomized units of schools, industries or whole communities, so that we are able to conduct good science and yet are extremely active in bringing health messages and

actual prevention services to whole populations and communities.

Thus, this research is among the more visible and influential of University outreach activities. The "valueless pursuit of truth" is unknown in this field, and I think, therefore, it would be especially useful for the Central Administration to appreciate the uniqueness of such activities in the School of Public Health. They are not self-centered undertakings, either individually or in respect to the unit.

Because far reaching decisions about the future of the University are in preparation in your office, I would hope that a wider understanding of the great strengths that the School of Public Health brings to the University might put its research, training and service efforts in appropriate perspective. This concern for the public's health, and our teaching and research for the public health, have a rich potential for the future of this university, fully comparable to that of "high tech" and "technology transfer." In addition, these undertakings have profound humanitarian values at their core and humane accomplishments in their implementation. A perusal of the grant activities enclosed herein should document this claim.

Cordially,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Henry Blackburn", written in black ink. The signature is fluid and extends across the width of the text area below it.

Henry Blackburn, MD
Professor and Director

Enclosure

/jrh

✓ bpc: AEC
E. Leyasmeyer
R. Kane