

APPENDIX B

UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN
Department of Bacteriology

February 20, 1958

Mr. Ward Ross
Wisconsin Alumni Research Foundation
506 N. Walnut Street
Madison 5, Wisconsin

Dear Ward:

On a couple of occasions when I have been with you or Bill Hendrickson, the question of the relationship between the Foundation and the University staff, or potential inventors, has arisen. I think that I can understand why there might be some concern about losing a good discovery because of lack of understanding or communication between the Foundation and the inventor; on the other hand I feel that the importance of the method used to establish and maintain this communication cannot be overestimated.

As you know, there is no directive from the University that states how the results of research are to be handled; this lack of direction, I am sure, is by many a cherished part of our academic freedom. I believe that any type of communication established between the Foundation and the University staff would have to be such that none could construe it as a violation of this freedom. Of course, the entire problem is greatly complicated by the many vague and personal interpretations of academic freedom.

During the past few months there have been, what I considered, very fine articles concerning some of the inventions and activities of the Foundation in the local newspapers. Publicity of this sort, as well as good releases when grants and gifts are made to the University, seem to me to be an almost ideal type of communication. Certainly, by such contacts there is no chance that an inventor will feel that he is being persuaded to take his invention to the Foundation.

There is a possibility I suppose that a faculty member might make a patentable discovery and not recognize it as such, but that seems pretty remote. I do not know of any such instances that have occurred during the fifteen years that I have been here. To me, an individual's not being able to recognize the utility of a finding almost precludes that person from ever making such a finding. But if a discovery is missed in, say a lifetime, can one compare that loss with what might be lost by disgust with anything having a semblance of persuasion. This disgust might stem from a number of reasons, from a feeling of violation of certain rights to just plain cussedness; but whatever the potential source, it should be avoided.

I think this indicates my feeling on the subject at the moment and I sincerely wish to thank you for asking for an expression of opinion. With best personal regards to you and the Foundation staff, I am

Sincerely yours,

S. G. Knight
Assoc. Professor, Bacteriology

SGK:mn