

Dr. W.O.S. Sutherland, Chair
English Department
University of Texas
Austin, Texas 78712

Dear Dr. Sutherland:

I am writing to review our August 20 conversation and to make sure that my comments at that time are clear. Once again, I was gratified by the appreciation that you expressed to me for my work in the Writing Lab over the past five years.

As I told you on Monday, leaving the University, the Department and the Lab is hard, particularly now that so many interesting and challenging projects are at hand. However, the earning potential, the benefits and the security offered by IBM are difficult for me to ignore, especially now as I head for 40 years of age and look forward to adopting one or two children in the next few years. Although the IBM job will be interesting and challenging, sacrificing the greater freedom and flexibility of the university life, the directorship of a facility I have worked so hard to build, and the challenging and interesting work that I do in the Lab is difficult; but I believe that it is the responsible thing for me to do in consideration of my wife and future family.

I want to emphasize once again, however, that if arrangements could be made such that I could expect some resemblance of the security and earning potential at UT that I look forward to at IBM, I would be delighted to consider staying on as director of the Lab. I am well aware that academic salaries cannot match those in the business and industrial world, nor can the benefits. To compensate for this reduced earning potential and to afford the genuine sense of security and permanence that I must have at this point in my life, a higher academic rank would be necessary.

As we discussed, such a rank would also enable me to do some projects in the Lab that would be quite beneficial to the Department as a whole. But, as we also discussed, a rank of assistant professor might present serious problems considering how much on-duty supervision the Lab requires and how much such supervision would detract from the director's research and publishing activities.

I regret placing you, the Department and the Writing Lab in this dilemma: I recognize that making the the lab director an assistant professor might only be a formula for disaster every five years; I recognize too that making the lab director an associate

professor would be difficult and upsetting to other Department members. Still, for the sake of myself and my family I must seek a position that affords a reasonable sense of security and permanence and a reasonable opportunity for professional growth and salary increase. To review what I would need in order to stay at the University, I would hope to have a starting salary roughly equal that offered by IBM, some reasonable expectation of increments in the ensuing years, and the undeniable security and permanence such as is afforded by the rank of associate professor.


If and when arrangements such as those I've outlined above can be made, I will seriously consider returning to the Writing Lab. I am honored by the mere fact of your willingness to try to reach some solution in this matter. I must emphasize that if indeed I am able to return, I will not only resume the level and quality of my past work but will be able to contribute more to the University commensurate with my new position. Specifically, I will be able to supervise the completion of our Project Quest in which we shall develop innovative instructional software for composition and to supervise the new English 106 and 206 courses. Also, I will be ready to become involved in the recruitment and retention of minorities, a project to which the Lab has much to offer. As I mentioned in our conversation the other day, I will also be able to conduct a practicum in writing labs at the undergraduate level which should attract many students and provide excellent additional teacher preparation. I intend to make the Lab a center for research in composition and to share the opportunities for publication with the graduate student members of the Lab. And finally, I will be able to return to the literary work I was so deeply immersed in as I was finishing my dissertation. I look forward to being able to return to the several book-length projects and the dozen article-length projects that I have long had in mind. Thus, I can assure you that my contribution to the Department and to the University would be as substantial as I could make it, were I to receive the financial and professional support that I am seeking.

To review one other topic of our conversation, I am pleased that you want me to continue in the Project Quest work even if I am employed at IBM. While it will be much more difficult to complete the project successfully, I am quite willing to volunteer my after-hours time to it in that the project will be as advantageous to me in my career at IBM as it would be in academia. I will, however, need to keep my DEC-20 account at least another year: my home terminal will enable me to communicate with other members of the project regularly. Also, I should stress that for our Project Quest to be a success, keeping Paul Meyer is of utmost importance.

My IBM position begins September 4. If I have not heard from you by then, I will of course begin my work there as we discussed. I

will consider returning in January or September if everything works out. I will look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,



David A. McMurrey

cc: John Ruszkiewicz