

June 19, 1919.

Dr. Charles W. Eliot,  
Cambridge, Mass.

Dear Dr. Eliot:-

This story is among the traditions of Stanford. I should be under obligations to you if you would tell me how much of it is literally true.

Mr. and Mrs. Stanford visited Dr. Eliot at Harvard, telling him of their intention to found a University. Dr. Eliot warned them that a University was a costly enterprise and that they should never think of starting on an endowment of less than five millions of dollars. Stanford smiled and turning to his wife said, "Jane, I think we can afford that."

Very truly yours,

Stanford, Calif.

28 June 1919

Dear Dr. Jordan:

The interview that I had with Mr. and Mrs. Stanford occurred before they had apparently made up their minds as to the nature of the monument to their son. They discussed with me several projects. One was a university to be placed at Palo Alto as near as possible to a tree under which their son had once eaten lunch. Another was a large institution to be situated at San Francisco and to combine a museum with a large hall in which free public lectures in considerable variety should be given. The third was a technical school which should cover civil, mechanical, and mining engineering at a place which they had not decided on, but where water-power was obtainable. They asked which of these projects seemed to me most desirable as a monument. I answered a university. Mrs. Stanford then asked how much a university would cost them in addition to land and buildings. It was then that I replied that a free university, that is, a university which should make no charge for tuition, ought not to be attempted with an endowment smaller than five million dollars. A silence followed, and Mrs. Stanford looked grave; but after an appreciable interval Mr. Stanford said with a smile, "well, Jane, we could manage that, couldn't we?" and Mrs. Stanford nodded. There followed some discussion as to the cost of the other two projects they had in mind, during which I expressed the opinion that the university would prove to be the most expensive of the three to maintain properly. One impression left on my mind at the time was that Mr. Stanford

really had two objects in view. He wanted to build a monument to his dead boy; but he also wanted to do something which would interest his wife for the rest of her life, and give her solid satisfaction. The latter motive seemed to me the strongest in him. I thought, too, that she had done much more thinking on the subject than he had.

Altogether it was for me a very interesting interview. I never had a subsequent conversation with either of them; but some correspondence passed between Mrs. Stanford and me, chiefly, I think, about the selection of the first Board of Trustees.

This is in answer to yours of June 19th.

Sincerely yours

Charles W. Eliot

Dr. David Starr Jordan

Asticou, Maine  
26 June 1919

Dear Dr. Jordan:

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Sincerely yours

[signed Charles W. Eliot]

Dr. David Starr Jordan