Under Secretary for Science
Washington, DC 20585

July 18, 2006

Professor Stewart C. Prager, Chair
Fusion Energy Sciences Advisory Committee
Department of Physics
University of Wisconsin-Madison
1150 University Avenue
Madison, WI 53706

Dear Professor Prager:

Thank you for your letter of June 9, 2006, describing the Fusion Energy Sciences Advisory Committee (FESAC) planned approach and process for responding to my charge letter of February 27, 2006 on how the fusion program should evolve over the coming decade. As I am sure you recognize, this is a significant activity that will affect the fusion program for many years and we must be very clear in identifying the goals, scope, deliverables, schedule, and time frame upon which FESAC can initiate this activity so it can be of the most benefit to the program. While I would like to make one revision now to the charge letter, I think it is extremely important that the new Associate Director (AD) for the Fusion Energy Sciences (FES) program have the opportunity to provide input on all other aspects of this activity to ensure we have buy-in by the individual who will be responsible for leading the FES program during this exciting time.

Based on the discussion at the FESAC meeting on June 1, 2006, and our internal discussions here in the Department, I have concluded that I need to revise the time frame of this activity in order for it to be of more value to the program. With the ITER Parties on the verge of signing an ITER Agreement which covers a 35-year period, we need to have a planning horizon that coincides with a significant part of this period. Therefore, I would suggest that the planning horizon be 20-25 years rather than the 10-year period as asked for in the original charge letter.

With regard to other aspects of this planning activity including the timing of the report, I would like to wait until the new AD comes on board in the latter half of this year, before providing any other input. Therefore, given the situation, I request that FESAC delay proceeding with its plans for responding to the February 27 charge until I, working with the new AD, send you further guidance. In addition, I would strongly suggest that you delay any decision on the format of community input, such as a Snowmass type meeting, until further guidance is received.

If you have any questions on this matter, please feel free to contact either Dr. James F. Decker at (202) 586-5434 or myself at (202) 586-0505. Thank you for your patience and understanding.

Sincerely,

Ray Orbach

Raymond L. Orbach
Under Secretary for Science

cc:
A. Opdenaker, SC