

FESAC Strategic Plan Final Report

Personal Comments of Stephen O. Dean
During FESAC October 10, 2014 Teleconference Meeting

Point 1. FESAC has 23 members (of whom 3 are non-voting ex-officio members). DOE forced a number of them to recuse themselves due to conflict of interest since they had connections with institutions that had major fusion experimental facilities or might get a new major facility in the future. After recusals, the final vote of what was left of the full FESAC was 6-3 to approve the report, not exactly a ringing endorsement of the report.

Point 2. Those forced to recuse themselves were selected based on connections to major facilities. But the subpanel was also subtly and not so subtly proposing to shift money around to other institutions that do not have major facilities. I submit that, if DOE insists on recusals on such a large scale, they should have excluded those from any institution that has fusion support from DOE. If this were done, the FESAC would not have had a quorum to conduct business at all. Universities and other DOE labs with smaller facilities have just as much at stake in how the pie is divided as those with major facilities.

Point 3. The C-MOD facility is given short shrift in this report. It is stated in the report, "Prompt closure of C-MOD is necessary to fund as quickly as possible the installation of necessary upgrades at DIII-D, to build the linear divertor simulator, and for the whole-plasma-domain modeling effort in the Predictive Initiative." What the urgency is to shut down C-MOD is not explained and no peer review is recommended of what important near-term data C-MOD might contribute to the fusion effort.

Point 4. Though I think the final report is otherwise an improvement over the earlier draft, I stand by most of my previous comments on the earlier draft. In particular, the fusion program needs to carefully consider the implications of the very large cost of ITER both in relation to the near term fusion effort and its implications for the prospects for commercial fusion power plants.