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The Peter S. Fuss Professor

January 29, 2004

Biocomplexity Faculty Search Committee,
c/o Prof. Rob de Ruyter van Steveninck,
Biocomplexity Institute,
Indiana University,
Swain Hall West 117,
Bloomington, IN 47405-7105

Dear Committee:

This letter is responding to your request for a letter of recommendation for Osman Akcakir who has applied for a faculty position at your institution. Osman did his Ph.D. in the area of biophysics with Professor Enrico Gratton at the University of Illinois, and then joined our biophysics group in late 2001 as a postdoctoral fellow. The laboratory, directed jointly by myself and Ari Gafni (Professor of Biological Chemistry) focuses on biophysical studies of protein folding and protein folding related diseases. Osman joined the group to continue our development of single molecule spectroscopy. We encouraged Osman to join with one of our existing projects, but he opted to initiate studies on a simpler protein that he hoped would show new information on few-state folding kinetics. This project required him to learn how to develop an expression system for producing the protein of interest since it was not commercially available, and also to learn how to do fluorescent labeling. This is a challenging effort, even for someone trained in biochemistry, but Osman believed he had time to achieve this and then carry out a single molecule fluorescence resonance energy transfer. His effort in this area showed he was not to be intimidated by challenges, though it is not surprising that his progress has been much slower than he had hoped. As a result, he is just now working to start the real measurements, after two years of preparation. Unfortunately, there is no additional money to extend his appointment beyond the two-month extension we were able to arrange.

Osman's training at Illinois focused on correlation fluctuation spectroscopy, and his work at Michigan included further development of our single molecule capability including developing a new CCD based imaging system along with new software. He also took responsibility for ordering a new ultrafast laser system for use in the single molecule spectroscopy laboratory. He has shown himself to be very capable in working with the sophisticated optical and laser instrumentation found in a biophysics laboratory.

I have not had the opportunity to see him teach. However, he has made several presentations to our group. His presentations are always well prepared. He is also well prepared for questions and is very receptive to discussions with other group members, both during and after his presentation.

In summary, Osman has worked steadily during his two-year appointment in Ann Arbor. I have no doubt that he is a capable scientist and will make progress towards his objectives in the right environment.

Sincerely,

Duncan Steel
Professor, Physics and EECS
The Peter S. Fuss Professor