



AURA STATEMENT REGARDING THE JAMES WEBB SPACE TELESCOPE

November 19, 2010-- This week, NASA revealed the report of the Independent Comprehensive Review Panel, led by John Casani, which was assembled to examine the causes of cost growth as well as schedule delays on the James Webb Space Telescope (JWST). The report reiterates the high scientific value of the mission and commends the project's technical performance. It identifies the primary areas of concern as budgeting and program management, and recommends changes to address these issues. We regard the report and the NASA response as a crucial opportunity to make certain that the James Webb Space Telescope is successful.

The astronomical community has been eagerly anticipating the scientific breakthroughs that will be brought about by the James Webb Space Telescope. From its top ranking in the 2000 Decadal Survey to its current role as a cornerstone of the 2010 Decadal Report, JWST holds the promise of transformational astronomy. JWST will enable astronomers to see the first galaxies, reveal the births of stars and planetary systems, and possibly find liquid water on planets around other stars.

The technological challenges of JWST have been as great as its scientific promise, and it has been heartening to see each of these successfully met. Importantly the Review Panel found that the considerable investments made in JWST so far have not been wasted, and that JWST is poised to succeed.

However, the programmatic challenges of this complex project have been of great concern and are integrally linked to the planned program put forth by the recent Decadal Survey, Astro2010. In that context we are gratified to see that NASA has already begun to implement the Panel's recommendation, and plan a path forward.

Hubble's technical development and schedule met similar challenges as those now faced by JWST, but Congress and NASA forged ahead and gave the world one of its greatest scientific tools of all time. More than any other scientific enterprise in

history, Hubble's impact on the public is legendary. For 20 years Hubble has made space astronomy relevant, exciting and engaging to school children and adults alike.

The James Webb Space Telescope is more complex and challenging than Hubble, but it will be equally revolutionary. JWST is not only the worthy scientific successor to Hubble, it will inspire the next generation of scientists and engineers. Like Hubble, it will transcend national borders and transform our view of the universe.

We are grateful to Senator Mikulski for her foresight in recognizing that a thorough review of the project was necessary, to John Casani and his Panel members for their diligent efforts, and to Administrator Bolden and NASA leadership for promptly rising to the challenge of meeting the Panel's recommendations. The James Webb Space Telescope is at a critical juncture, but the challenges are surmountable. We stand ready to help.

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