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October 25, 2011

The Hon. Senator Barbara Mikulski
Chairwoman, Senate Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice, and Science

The Hon. Frank R. Wolf
Chairman, House Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice, Science and
Related Agencies

Dear Senator Mikulski and Congressman Wolf,

We write as the Presidents and Chancellors of U.S. academic institutions with a deep commitment to NASA's space science program. Our partnerships with NASA have greatly enriched America's scientific enterprise and world leadership, most recently exemplified by the award of the 2011 Nobel Prize in Physics.

NASA Space Science has carried out observations critical to advancing our understanding of the origin of the universe; other planets in our Solar System; the Earth's oceans, continents, atmosphere, and the Earth's interactions with the Sun; and planets around other stars. These discoveries form a legacy that our generation leaves for history.

In addition to its science legacy, basic research fuels American ingenuity and is essential to the strength of our economy. As Vannevar Bush stated: "*to secure a high level of employment, to maintain a position of world leadership - the flow of new scientific knowledge must be both continuous and substantial.*" NASA plays a key role in this scientific and economic enterprise.

The James Webb Space Telescope (JWST) is the centerpiece of NASA's astrophysics program and the highest priority for the astronomy community. JWST provides *continuous and substantial* advance in cutting edge science. We are therefore extremely concerned by the proposed cancellation of JWST.

Following the extraordinary model of Hubble, JWST will make new discoveries that go well beyond our current knowledge and will revolutionize our understanding of the universe. Equally important, JWST is a dramatic demonstration of US technology leadership. Failing to complete JWST would not only represent a major loss to science, but a significant blow to American technological innovation and would undercut the major commitments to JWST by our partners Europe and Canada.

ASSOCIATION OF UNIVERSITIES FOR RESEARCH IN ASTRONOMY, INC.

The additional funding necessary to complete JWST is relatively modest within the context of the overall NASA budget. We recognize, however, that the Congress and Administration are confronting unprecedented fiscal challenges. In this environment, NASA must stringently manage the completion of JWST, with the goal being an expeditious launch in 2018.

Our institutions have a long history of involvement in NASA's space science program and have trained literally thousands of scientists and engineers over the past decades. As Presidents of these institutions, we urge the House-Senate committee to support a funding level for JWST that will allow its timely launch in the most cost effective manner possible. It is also important that this be accomplished within a balanced space science portfolio that can sustain the vitality of other programs in planetary exploration, heliophysics, and earth sciences.

Sincerely yours,

Mark P. Becker
President
Georgia State University

Dr. Philip P. DiStefano
Chancellor
University of Colorado at Boulder

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President
Yale University

cc: Senator Kay Bailey Hutchison
Ranking Republican, Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice, and Science
Hon. Chaka Fattah
Ranking Democrat, Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice, and Science
John Holdren
Director, Office of Science and Technology Policy