

August 21, 2020

To: James Webb Space Telescope User Community

From: James Bullock on behalf of the JWST Users Committee (JSTUC)

We are writing this letter to address concerns about the announced JWST Cycle 1 Deadline, which has been set as November 24, 2020. We are sympathetic to the struggles associated with the COVID-19 pandemic, including direct health issues, lack of childcare, homeschooling demands, and remote-instruction responsibilities. Those challenges, often felt disproportionately by women, can affect a broad swath of community, including the scientists who are preparing proposals, the scientists who will review the proposals as part of the peer review, and the scientists and staff who will vet the technical aspects and prepare the Cycle 1 science program for execution. As we squeeze the time for planning, proposal review, and technical review, we are putting pressure on all of those individuals.

While we understand the desire to move the community deadline to a later date, such a wholesale move is unfortunately not possible. Compressing the schedule would jeopardize the ability to review, select, and ready all Cycle 1 GO programs for execution before launch. In addition, moving the deadline to accommodate specific conflicts will inevitably exacerbate others.

As a mitigating step, we are recommending that STScI implement a new policy that will allow individuals to appeal for a later deadline (specifically, December 3, 2020) on a case-by-case basis. This contingency mechanism will help to alleviate the impact of hard-to-plan-for events that occur shortly before the primary deadline, such as illness, changes in childcare status, or the sudden shut-down of in-person teaching. **STScI leadership have indicated support for this proposal.** We expect a formal announcement soon, issued with instructions for how to appeal for the later deadline.



We recognize that the coming months are going to test us all in many ways. The current deadline is just under 14 weeks away and we encourage the community to start early and plan their proposal preparations to take into account known commitments. Nevertheless, we also recognize that for some individuals, there may be a real and justified need for an extension beyond the announced deadline. We cannot address the broader societal impacts, but we hope that this additional option will help mitigate unexpected challenges as best as possible.

Sincerely Yours,



James Bullock
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University of California, Irvine

