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NASA SELECTS IBEX AS NEXT SMALL EXPLORER MISSION

ADLER PLANETARIUM TO LEAD MISSION'S EDUCATION AND PUBLIC OUTREACH PROGRAM

CHICAGO – NASA announced today that the Interstellar Boundary Explorer (IBEX) mission has been selected as their next small explorer mission. The IBEX mission's goal is to capture the first global images of the boundaries between our solar system and the medium that fills our galaxy. Southwest Research Institute will lead the scientific team developing this mission, and the Adler Planetarium will provide educational and public outreach programming.

The Sun produces a solar wind that pushes out the cloud of dust and gas that surrounds our solar system, forming a protective bubble. The Earth, and other planets within our solar system, is shielded from potentially harmful radiation – such as cosmic rays - by this bubble.

The IBEX team will create a satellite that will be sent to orbit the Earth. This probe will be equipped with two sensors that will take the first-ever images of the boundary around our solar system. The images will create a map of the shape of this protective bubble. Because the solar system is continually moving, scientists believe that the contour and shape of the bubble varies and these images will provide actual evidence to support current scientific theories.

IBEX will explore how the solar wind regulates the radiation from the galaxy, which poses a major hazard to human exploration of the solar system, and may have affected the formation and evolution of life on Earth.

Dr. David McComas, Senior Executive Director of the Space Science and Engineering Division of Southwest Research Institute will lead the IBEX mission as the Principal Investigator.

Dr. Paul Knappenberger, President of the Adler Planetarium, will serve as a Co-Investigator on IBEX. " I think this is a wonderful opportunity for the Adler to partner with NASA and the IBEX scientists on this very exciting mission. This is a great chance to educate the general public as well as provide educational materials for teachers and students here in Chicago and across the nation."

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Adler Educator Lindsay Bartolone will serve as the Education and Public Outreach Lead for the entire IBEX mission. The Adler's educational goals for this mission include:

- Working with NASA organizations to provide materials specially-designed for visually-impaired learners including those with dyslexia.

- Partnering with Los Alamos National Laboratory to provide support for teachers of Native American and Hispanic students.

- Bringing the excitement of this mission to the general public in the form of a new D-3 sky show to be developed and shown in the Adler's StarRider Theater.

Implementation of this mission is to begin immediately and is expected to continue through 2010.

The Adler Planetarium & Astronomy Museum opened in 1930 as the Western Hemisphere's first planetarium and has been at the forefront of innovation ever since. Celebrating its 75th Anniversary in 2005, the Adler promotes leading edge research in astronomy and its fascinating history. In addition to one of the world's most important antique instrument collections, the Adler is the only museum in the world with two planetarium theaters, including the world's first StarRider Theater, the most technologically advanced digital planetarium. The Adler Planetarium is located at 1300 South Lake Shore Drive in Chicago and is open every day except for Thanksgiving and Christmas Day. For more information, call 312.922.STAR, or visit our website at www.adlerplanetarium.org

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