



28 March 2017

To the Executive Boards  
Univesiteit van Amsterdam  
Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam

Dear Colleagues

As members of the International Advisory Board for the science collaboration of the Amsterdam universities, we understand that you have recently put forward concrete plans for a partial clustering of the research institutes and educational programs in the science domain. We were informed that the decision-making process is now in a critical stage, the outcome of which seems highly uncertain. We would deeply regret to see the faltering of this long process, aimed at exploiting the great opportunities for further UvA-VU collaboration in both research and education.

This is in particular true in the case of Physics and Astronomy. In anticipation of the creation of a joint institute located at the Science Park campus, the educational programs have already merged into joint degree programs that, as we understand, are functioning very well. In combination with the existing national physics institutes on campus and the arrival of the national institute for space research SRON, this joint center would create one of the largest and strongest physics and astronomy clusters in Europe. During all our visits, we have consistently observed unanimous, bottom-up support for this collaboration and we understand that this support exists at all levels, both among faculty, staff, and students.

We like to point out the obvious dangers of not proceeding forward. An enormous investment of time and energy by very talented people went into the preparation of these plans. There is a real risk of loss of momentum and engagement of all those involved, and also unwanted uncertainty is created around the future of SRON.

Regardless of the outcome of the present decision-making process, we therefore urge the leadership of both universities to possibly decouple some of the initiatives and move forcefully ahead with merger of the physics and astronomy institutes, taking advantage of the present enthusiasm and energy within the communities. We are confident that you will recognize the importance of this opportunity and will find ways to facilitate it. As members of the International Advisory Board, we will be happy to provide further advice and assistance where needed.

Sincerely,

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