



Dawn Discovery Mission to 4 Vesta and 1 Ceres: One year to launch

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The Dawn mission employs ion propulsion to fly to and orbit both Vesta and Ceres carrying a framing camera, a visible and infrared mapping spectrometer, gamma ray and neutron spectrometer, and radiometric measurements for gravity determination. The mission is now entering the assembly, test, integration and launch preparation phase, the final stage before launch in June 2006. As we enter this phase the capabilities of the system are becoming better defined, enabling operations and the returned data set to be reevaluated. We report on the new mission plan, including arrival dates, orbit parameters and data volumes. We also review the latest scientific understanding of Vesta and Ceres and how Dawn will contribute significantly to the understanding of the origin and evolution of these two most different and fascinating minor planets.