



Dr. Michael Watkins, Director of JPL



Michael M. Watkins became director of JPL on July 1, 2016. Watkins, an engineer and scientist, previously was on the staff of JPL for 22 years. In 2015 and 2016 he spent a year at the University of Texas at Austin, where he held the Clare Cockrell Williams Chair in Engineering and was director of the university's Center for Space Research. During his JPL career, Watkins served as chief scientist for the Laboratory's Engineering and Science Directorate, manager of JPL's Science Division, and manager of its Navigation and Mission Design Section. He was mission manager for the Mars Science Laboratory mission and led NASA development and review teams for the Cassini, Mars Odyssey and Deep Impact robotic space missions. Watkins also served as project scientist for the GRACE, GRAIL and GRACE Follow-On missions. Watkins holds bachelor's, master's and Ph.D. degrees in aerospace engineering from the University of Texas at Austin. He has published in both engineering and science, contributed more than 100 research publications and conference presentations, and serves or served on the boards of numerous international scientific and engineering societies. In addition, he has taught estimation, filtering theory and system engineering at the University of Texas at Austin and at Caltech.