

Prof. ROBERT WILLIAMS - Biography

Robert Williams is currently Astronomer Emeritus at Space Telescope Science Institute (STScI) in Baltimore, and Distinguished Osterbrock Professor at the University of California, Santa Cruz. From 1993-98 he served as Director of the Institute, which with Goddard Space Flight Center operates Hubble Space Telescope for NASA and ESA. Before assuming his present positions Williams spent 8 years in Chile as Director of the Cerro Tololo Interamerican Observatory, the national observatory of the U.S. in the southern hemisphere. Prior to that time he was Professor of Astronomy at the University of Arizona in Tucson for 18 years. Dr. Williams' research specialties include novae, nebulae, and emission-line spectroscopy and analysis.

Williams received his undergraduate degree from the University of California, Berkeley in 1962, and a Ph.D. in astronomy from the University of Wisconsin in 1965. He was Senior Fulbright Professor at University College London from 1972-73, and received the Alexander von Humboldt Award from the German government in 1991. In 1998 he was awarded the Beatrice Tinsley Prize of the American Astronomical Society for his leadership of the Hubble Deep Field project, which revealed in remarkable detail the evolution of galaxies in the early universe. For this project he was awarded the NASA Distinguished Public Service Medal in 1999.

Dr. Williams is an elected member of the American Academy of Arts & Sciences, and is a Past-President of the International Astronomical Union. In 2016 he was awarded the Karl Schwarzschild Medal for career achievement in astrophysics by the German Astronomische Gesellschaft. He is a strong advocate for science education and has lectured around the world on astronomical discoveries and the importance of science in modern life. He resides in Baltimore with his wife Elaine, a pediatric psychologist who specializes in the diagnosis and treatment of autism disorders, and they are co-founders of a non-profit organization in Baltimore that places adults with autism in the workplace.