



By [Clare Skelly](#)

Upon graduating from the University of Virginia in 1983, George Morrow began his decades-long career at NASA's Goddard Space Flight Center. His first day of work was typical for a new employee, feeling uneasy and overwhelmed in a new environment. "I didn't know anyone and back then my desk didn't have a computer I could play on," he said.

Fast forward 32 years later and Morrow is now Goddard's deputy director, helping oversee the center's programs and projects as well as its nearly 9,000 employees. He officially took over on April 1 following the retirement of his predecessor Rick Obenschain and after serving as Goddard's director of flight projects since 2007.

A graduate in chemical engineering, Morrow spent his first few years at Goddard in the power systems branch working with batteries and solar arrays. All missions need robust power systems and he was supporting most Goddard missions at the time. He saw how different projects were managed, prompting him to think seriously about the trajectory of his career.

"What does it take to be a project manager?" Morrow recalled asking himself. He proceeded to seek out those opportunities with the goal of becoming a project manager with each new position.

In 1988, Morrow joined the Hubble Space Telescope project as a systems engineer. He supported launch and commissioning as well as the first two servicing missions. He

was the observatory systems manager for the first servicing mission and deputy project manager for flight systems and servicing for the second.

"Believe me, I cannot believe it's been 25 years," Morrow said about Hubble's upcoming launch anniversary on April 24. "You can walk down the street at Goddard and ask people you pass, 'Do you have any association with Hubble?' and probably around 70 percent will say yes."

Before Hubble's success there was a period of stress and worry. While the launch was successful, the flawed mirror and solar arrays on Hubble caused problems for NASA. "The agency could not let the first servicing mission fail," Morrow said. He remembers working long hours, but said the blood, sweat and tears of everyone involved paid off.

He described the feeling of being a part of the Hubble legacy as surreal. "I often wonder how I got the good fortune of getting involved in something so incredible," he added.

In 2001, Morrow left NASA briefly. He remembered the first phone call he received after making the decision to accept an industry position. "Rick [Obenschain] called me and said, 'I wish you well, but are you sure you know what you're doing? I did that and I came back.'"

Morrow returned to Goddard less than two years later.

Before Obenschain became the center's deputy director in 2007, he and Morrow worked closely together in the flight



projects directorate. Morrow described himself and Obenschain as each other's alter egos during that time.

"Rick would do anything to make the center successful and he had the wherewithal and leadership qualities to make it happen," Morrow said. He credits much of his own success to Obenschain's guidance and counsel.

Looking over his career to date, Morrow is most proud of the progress of the flight projects directorate as an organization. "It used to be normal for projects to overrun their budgets and schedules," he said. Today, more projects such as the Tracking and Data Relay Satellite, the Global Precipitation Measurement mission and Landsat 8 are being developed under budget and finishing on schedule.

As Morrow gets settled in his new role, his colleagues have expressed full confidence in his ability to be an effective leader for the center.

"George knows Goddard and understands the challenges we face to accomplish our missions," said Judy Bruner, safety and mission assurance director. "He can tackle any technical challenge, but I think the greatest attribute he brings to the position is that he cares about our people and what we do."

"His character, work ethic and outstanding leadership skills reflect devotion, perseverance, reliability and loyalty," added Lisa Hoffman, administrative officer for the flight projects directorate. "His admiration for and knowledge of

NASA will make him a great deputy center director."

In his new position, Morrow, along with all other leadership deputies, will ensure that Center Director Chris Scolese and Goddard are successful in their work. This includes addressing things necessary to keep the center functioning efficiently along with projects ranging from the James Webb Space Telescope to the Global Ecosystem Dynamics Investigation mission.

In the coming months, Morrow looks forward to learning more about parts of the center that he is not as familiar with and Goddard's three remote facilities: Wallops Flight Facility in Wallops Island, Virginia; the Goddard Institute for Space Studies in New York; and the Independent Verification & Validation Facility in Fairmont, West Virginia.

"I will help continue the vision that keeps good work here at Goddard," he said. "I will also keep our people and facilities busy doing the cutting-edge things we've always done and the things the country needs us to do in the future." ■

Above, left: George Morrow took over as Goddard's deputy director on April 1, following the retirement of Rick Obenschain. Photo credit: NASA/Goddard/Bill Hrybyk

Above, right: George Morrow and Chris Scolese (seated left and right, respectively), both then-project managers for the Goddard Earth Observing System, with a group of sponsored interns and the interns' mentor in 1998. Photo credit: NASA/Goddard/George Morrow