

Director Mike Witherell  
Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory  
Biography (2021)

In January of 2016, Michael Witherell was named the director of Berkeley Lab by the University of California's Board of Regents. A leading physicist with a highly distinguished career in teaching, research and managing complex organizations, Dr. Witherell has received numerous honors and recognitions for his scientific contributions and achievements. This is the second DOE national lab that he has led; he served as the director of Fermi National Accelerator Laboratory (Fermilab) in northern Illinois. He then went on to serve as Vice Chancellor for Research at UC Santa Barbara, where he also held the Presidential Chair in Physics. Throughout his tenure at Berkeley Lab, Director Witherell has championed a vision of stewardship of Lab's people, research, and resources that make LBNL's mission possible. An important part of this stewardship is the Lab's robust commitment to diversity and equity, as well as a culture of inclusion.

Director Witherell first arrived at UCSB in 1981 as an assistant professor of physics from Princeton University. Soon after joining UCSB, he led an experiment (at Fermilab) that collected and studied the first large sample of charmed particles observed with a silicon microstrip vertex detector. As a result of that experiment, he was awarded the W. K. H. Panofsky Prize in Experimental Particle Physics from the American Physical Society in 1990.

In 1999, Director Witherell was appointed director of Fermilab, the DOE laboratory dedicated to high-energy physics. During his six years as director, Fermilab upgraded the Tevatron accelerator complex, the highest-energy collider then in operation. The laboratory also completed a \$150 million project to build a long-baseline neutrino facility, which sent a beam of neutrinos 450 miles underground to a detector built at the Soudan Underground Laboratory in northern Minnesota.

In 2005 he rejoined UCSB as vice chancellor for research (VCR), where he managed research administration and technology commercialization. He also supervised interdisciplinary research institutes in marine science, earth science, neuroscience, social sciences, and ethnic studies, in addition to the California Nanosystems Institute and six sites of the UC Natural Reserve System.

In 2010, while continuing in his role as VCR, Director Witherell returned to his research on the nature of dark matter. He joined the LUX collaboration, which completed the most sensitive search for interactions of dark matter particles with normal matter.

Director Witherell is also part of an international research team that designed the LUX-Zeplin (LZ) project, an experiment that will be three orders of magnitude more sensitive than LUX. In 2014, the LZ project was selected as the largest next-generation dark matter experiment in the DOE's High Energy Physics program.

Director Witherell is a member of the National Academy of Sciences and a fellow of the American Physical Society and the American Association for the Advancement of Science. He currently chairs the Board on Physics and Astronomy at the National Academies; sits on the Committee on Science, Engineering and Public Policy at the National Academies; is a member of the American Physical Society's Physics Policy Committee; and serves on the Board of Directors for Science for Nature and People. He is the 2004 recipient of the Energy Secretary's Gold Award.

He received his Ph.D. from the University of Wisconsin, Madison, in 1973 and his B.S. from the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, in 1968.