

Ellen Ochoa

Biography



Optical Information Processing
B.S. Physics, San Diego State University
M.S. Electrical Engineering, Stanford University
Ph.D. Electrical Engineering (Optical Information Processing),
Stanford University

Ellen Ochoa retired from federal service in 2018 as Director of NASA's Johnson Space Center, which leads the human space flight enterprise for the nation. She is an experienced astronaut, having served as a crew member on four space shuttle missions in a variety of roles including leading onboard scientific activities, operating the robotic arm, and serving as flight engineer during the launch, rendezvous, and entry phases of the mission. Prior to being named Center Director, Dr. Ochoa was Deputy Center Director for five years; she previously led the Flight Crew Operations Directorate, managing the astronaut office and the aircraft operations divisions.

As the first Hispanic female astronaut, Dr. Ochoa has given more than 300 presentations focusing on the importance of a science, technology, engineering, and math education. She has six schools named after her, several books written about her for the K-8 grades and has been profiled in textbooks and on websites geared toward encouraging females and minorities to pursue technical fields. She is the recipient of many awards including NASA's highest award, the Distinguished Service Medal, the Presidential Distinguished Rank of the Senior Executive Service, and honorary doctorates from six universities.

Dr. Ochoa began her career as a research engineer at Sandia National Laboratories and NASA's Ames Research Center. She has three patents in the area of optical information processing and numerous publications in technical journals. She is a Fellow of the American Institute of Aeronautics and Astronautics, the American Association for the Advancement of Science, the National Academy of Inventors and the Optical Society of America.

Elected Chair in 2020, Dr. Ochoa is in her first term on the National Science Board to which she was appointed in 2016. She previously served as Vice Chair from 2018 to 2020.

Dr. Ochoa serves on a number of boards including the Gordon and Betty Moore Foundation. She previously chaired the Nomination Evaluation Committee for the National Medal of Technology and Innovation, served for 10 years on the Stanford University Board of Trustees, and was a member of the Stanford's School of Engineering Advisory Council and Aeronautics and Astronautics Department Visiting Committee.