

Mark V. Sykes – Biography

Mark V. Sykes is Chief Executive Officer and Director of the Planetary Science Institute at its headquarters in Tucson, Arizona. In 1978, he received his Bachelors in Physics from the University of Oregon where he studied the first known black hole system, Cygnus X-1. He subsequently studied Fourier optics and laser physics at the Oregon Graduate Center from which he received a Master of Electronic Science in 1982. He received his PhD in planetary sciences from the University of Arizona in 1986, and was awarded its Gerard P. Kuiper Memorial Award for his research. He discovered cometary dust trails and numerous rings of dust surrounding the inner solar system arising from recent asteroid collisions. He is a Co-Investigator on the NASA Dawn mission to Vesta and the dwarf planet Ceres. He has served as Chair of the Division for Planetary Sciences of the American Astronomical Society. In 1991 he was honored by the International Astronomical Union with the designation of Minor Planet 4438 Sykes for his discoveries, and in 2007 was the first recipient of the NASA Planetary Science Division Distinguished Service Award. In 2016, he received the AAS DPS Harold Masursky Award for Meritorious Service to Planetary Science.