For release to LQP, U of A press office, etc. Distribute to LPL faculty, students, and research staff, Steward Observatory faculty, students, and research staff, and PSI research staff.

PAUL WITHERS TO RECEIVE
2002 GERARD P. KUIPER MEMORIAL AWARD

A Planetary Sciences graduate student, Paul Withers, will receive the 2002 Kuiper Memorial Award. The award is presented to UA students in the field of planetary sciences who have excelled in academic work and research. The award is presented in memory of Gerard P. Kuiper, the founder of the U of A's Lunar and Planetary Laboratory and Department of Planetary Sciences. Kuiper died in 1973, shortly after the department was established.

Withers is completing his fourth year as a planetary sciences graduate student at the University of Arizona. He came to the Planetary Sciences department from Queens' College, Cambridge University (UK), where he received Bachelor's and Master's degrees.

Withers is receiving the Kuiper Memorial Award for academic excellence, recording a perfect 4.0 grade point average at UA, and for broad and outstanding research. Withers works extensively with spacecraft missions, including the US Mars Global Surveyor and Mars Odyssey missions, as well as the UK Beagle-2 mission. He has also investigated, in collaboration with the UA history department, a controversial theory claiming that a major lunar impact event was observed in 1178 A.D.

The Mars Global Surveyor spacecraft was inserted into orbit around Mars using a risky technique called aerobraking, employing friction from the high, thin Martian atmosphere to gradually lower the spacecraft's altitude. Withers was closely involved in planning Global Surveyor's successful aerobraking maneuvers. He is currently completing dissertation research at LPL that includes using the aerobraking data to for a major study of Mars' high-altitude winds and upper-atmosphere structure.

Withers will be presented with a plaque and cash award at the University of Arizona's fall honors convocation.