



Written by [Warren Mass](#) on January 9, 2017

Professor Resigns Due to “Craziness” Over Climate Science

Dr. Judith Curry, the former chair of the School of Earth and Atmospheric Sciences at Georgia Tech, announced her resignation from her tenured faculty position in a January 3 post on her blog *Climate Etc.* Curry, who has been described as both a “climate realist” and a “climate denier” (depending on the perspective of the individual describing her) said, “A deciding factor was that I no longer know what to say to students and postdocs regarding how to navigate the CRAZINESS in the field of climate science.” (Emphasis in original.)



In her post explaining the reasons for her resignation, Curry — whose research has earned her appointments to and awards from the American Meteorological Society, the American Geophysical Union, NASA, NOAA, and the National Science Foundation — continued:

Research and other professional activities are professionally rewarded only if they are channeled in certain directions approved by a politicized academic establishment — funding, ease of getting your papers published, getting hired in prestigious positions, appointments to prestigious committees and boards, professional recognition, etc.

Curry questioned openly how young scientists are able to navigate the hurdles placed in their path by “a politicized academic establishment” at Georgia Tech and noted that “it often becomes a battle of scientific integrity versus career suicide.”

In explaining her decision to retire from her position, Curry wrote that “the superficial reason is that I want to do other things, and no longer need my university salary.”

However, there was more to her decision than that. “The deeper reasons,” she wrote, “have to do with my growing disenchantment with universities, the academic field of climate science and scientists.”

Considering the effort and expense involved in publishing academic papers for peer review that perhaps 100 people might read, Curry decided that concentrating on her blog, *Climate Etc.*, and other non-academic outlets was a better option. She wrote:

Once you detach from the academic mindset, publishing on the internet makes much more sense, and the peer review you can get on a technical blog is much more extensive. But peer review is not really the point; provoking people to think in new ways about something is really the point. In other words, science as process, rather than a collection of decreed “truths.”

Curry became a subject of controversy in 2010 when a *Scientific American* article labeled her a “climate heretic” for “turning” on her colleagues by questioning the dogma of the UN’s Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC). Responding to that label in her October 25, 2010 blog, Curry wrote: “If the IPCC is dogma, then count me in as a heretic. The story should not be about me, but about how and why



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the IPCC became dogma.”

Curry asked why she was being singled out when former MIT professor Richard Lindzen and the respected meteorologist Roger Pielke Sr. had been making far more critical statements about the IPCC and climate science for a longer period than she had. She opined:

The answer must be in the narrative of my transition from a “high priestess of global warming” to engagement with skeptics and a critic of the IPCC. The “high priestess of global warming” narrative (I used to see this term fairly frequently in the blogosphere, can’t spot it now) arose from my association with the hurricane and global warming issue, which at the time was the most alarming issue associated with global warming.

At some point, however, Curry’s research led her to part company with the IPCC’s position on global warming and climate change. During 2008 and 2009, she became increasingly concerned by the lack of “policy neutrality” by people involved in the IPCC and policies that didn’t make sense to her.

In November 2009, when she first saw the “Climategate” e-mails, which confirmed concerns and suspicions about the prevailing views on global warming that she already had, she began expressing her concerns publicly. She started receiving e-mails that asked her to be sensitive to the feelings of the scientists involved and she said she was a whole lot more worried about the IPCC, in terms of whether it could be saved and whether it should be saved. She said she previously had been willing to substitute the IPCC for her own personal judgment, but after reading those e-mails, she concluded that the IPCC had lost the moral high ground.

It was this development in her thinking and her concerns about the credibility of the IPCC that caused the climate “establishment” at *Scientific American* to label her as a “climate heretic.”

Curry was profiled in an [article posted by The New American a year ago](#). That article noted not only *Scientific American*’s critical label, but also a charge leveled against her by Pennsylvania State University professor Michael Mann of discredited hockey-stick graph fame, who tweeted that she was “#AntiScience.”

But not all of the publicity was negative. Climate reporter David Rose of *The Spectator* wrote: “Her record of peer-reviewed publication in the best climate-science journals is second to none.”

In an interview, Curry told Rose about her aforementioned response when the 2009 “Climategate” e-mail scandal hit, revealing correspondence between UN researchers that suggested fraudulent reporting of data to favor their political agenda. Curry said she “saw it as a threat to the IPCC and all of climate science, largely because of this trust issue.”

She explained to Rose, “I started saying that scientists should be more accountable, and I began to engage with skeptic bloggers. I thought that would calm the waters. Instead, I was tossed out of the tribe.”

“Curry lost her place in the IPCC clique,” wrote Van Jensen in the *Georgia Tech Alumni Magazine*. Suddenly, “her opinions were called ‘unconstructive,’ full of ‘factual misstatements,’ and ‘completely at odds’ with her previous position on global warming.”

By retiring from Georgia Tech, Curry can now pursue her research and writing independent and free from the political pressures within academia. She writes about her future plans:

At this point, I figure that I can reach more people (including students and young researchers) via social media. Do I pretend to have any answers to all this? No, but I hope I am provoking students



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and scientists to think outside of their little bubble.... I am interested in figuring out new and better ways to apply weather and climate data, weather forecast information and future regional climate scenarios to supporting real world decision making to manage risks and associated with weather and climate variability. I became interested in such applications over a decade ago, and Peter Webster and I founded a company [Climate Forecast Applications Network \(CFAN\)](#) to do just that.... I will be starting a new blog for CFAN, more focused on weather and shorter-term climate issues (I will cross post any relevant posts at Climate Etc.).... We'll see how all this plays out, but I figured I've earned the right to explore and do what I want. This is my definition of academic freedom (and I'm not asking anyone else to pay for it).

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