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Gardner-Webb University Professor Offers Insights on Issues of Climate Change

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Communications

February 20, 2017

Biology Professor Dr. Tom Jones Discusses Impact of Global Warming

BOILING SPRINGS, N.C. – Following the third consecutive year in which average global temperatures set record highs, the issue of climate change may—to some—seem less debatable. Yet, it remains one of the most controversial and politically-charged topics in both the nation and world.

Dr. Tom Jones, Gardner-Webb University Professor of Biology and Associate Dean of the Honors Program, understands why there might be confusion about the issues of climate change and global warming. “There is a difference between climate and weather,” Jones stated. “Climate is long-term trends. Weather, which is more noticeable, is what happens on a day-to-day, short-term basis.”

According to Jones, many individuals may only be evaluating the changes in weather in their particular location of the world. But, he shares, the most extreme changes are actually occurring in polar and arctic regions of the world, where fewer people are impacted because of a significantly-lower population density.

“There are meteorological sampling stations all over the world,” he offered. “Not only do they measure temperatures in the atmosphere, oceanic temperatures are also taken. People may argue about what the causes are, or how far climate change is going to go. But it’s hard to argue with thermometers.”

Officials from the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) have reported that since the late 19th century, the Earth’s surface temperature has risen by about 2.0 degrees Fahrenheit (about 1.1 degrees Celcius), a change attributed to increased carbon dioxide and other man-made emissions into the atmosphere.

“With that warming comes changes in evaporation, precipitation, hazardous weather, etc.,” Jones reflected. “Some of the arguments about how far it’s going to go have legitimacy.”

Long-term effects of global warming are already being seen, Jones stated. “Plants and animals may not be able to adapt to the changing climate as rapidly as they need to in order to survive. There are already various species disappearing,” he said. “We’re already having to shift where we grow certain crops. As tropical-like temperatures exceed or go beyond what the normal tropical boundaries are, any of those things that we typically called tropical diseases are going to become ‘extra-tropical diseases’ and will have the potential to impact millions.”

A proactive approach is needed, Jones believes, if policy-makers are serious about addressing the problem. “It would be nice to say that there’s a quick, easy, or inexpensive answer, but I think we are still up in the air regarding how much this is going to cost, how long it’s going to take, and how much energy it’s going to take. And it’s going to take a lot,” he observed.

“It’s not just going to reverse itself,” Jones continued. “We have all of this momentum, and it’s not going to come to an immediate stop—unless we have the political will and the social will to make significant changes.”

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To hear the full WGWG.org interview with Dr. Tom Jones, click link below: