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A Young Bush Appointee Resigns His Post at NASA

By ANDREW C. REVKIN

George C. Deutsch, the young presidential appointee at NASA who told public affairs workers to limit reporters' access to a top climate scientist and told a Web designer to add the word "theory" at every mention of the Big Bang, resigned yesterday, agency officials said.

Mr. Deutsch's resignation came on the same day that officials at Texas A&M University confirmed that he did not graduate from there, as his résumé on file at the agency asserted.

Officials at NASA headquarters declined to discuss the reason for the resignation.

"Under NASA policy, it is inappropriate to discuss personnel matters," said Dean Acosta, the deputy assistant administrator for public affairs and Mr. Deutsch's boss.

The resignation came as the National Aeronautics and Space Administration was preparing to review its policies for communicating science to the public. The review was ordered Friday by Michael D. Griffin, the NASA administrator, after a week in which many agency scientists and midlevel public affairs officials described to The New York Times instances in which they said political pressure was applied to limit or flavor discussions of topics uncomfortable to the Bush administration, particularly global warming.

"As we have stated in the past, NASA is in the process of revising our public affairs policies across the agency to ensure our commitment to open and full communications," the statement from Mr. Acosta said.

The statement said the resignation of Mr. Deutsch was "a separate matter."

Mr. Deutsch, 24, was offered a job as a writer and editor in NASA's public affairs office in Washington last year after working on President Bush's re-election campaign and inaugural committee, according to his résumé. No one has disputed those parts of the document.

According to his résumé, Mr. Deutsch received a "Bachelor of Arts in journalism, Class of 2003."

Yesterday, officials at Texas A&M said that was not the case.

"George Carlton Deutsch III did attend Texas A&M University but has not completed the requirements for a degree," said an e-mail message from Rita Presley, assistant to the registrar at the university, responding to a query from The Times.

Repeated calls and e-mail messages to Mr. Deutsch on Tuesday were not answered.

Mr. Deutsch's educational record was first challenged on Monday by Nick Anthis, who graduated from Texas A&M last year with a biochemistry degree and has been writing a Web log on science policy, scientificactivist.blogspot.com.

After Mr. Anthis read about the problems at NASA, he said in an interview: "It seemed like political figures had really overstepped the line. I was just going to write some commentary on this when somebody tipped me off that George Deutsch might not have graduated."

He posted a blog entry asserting this after he checked with the university's association of former students. He reported that the association said Mr. Deutsch received no degree.

A copy of Mr. Deutsch's résumé was provided to The Times by someone working in NASA headquarters who, along with many other NASA employees, said Mr. Deutsch played a small but significant role in an intensifying effort at the agency to exert political control over the flow of information to the public.

Such complaints came to the fore starting in late January, when James E. Hansen, the climate scientist, and several midlevel public affairs officers told The Times that political appointees, including Mr. Deutsch, were pressing to limit Dr. Hansen's speaking and interviews on the threats posed by global warming.

Yesterday, Dr. Hansen said that the questions about Mr. Deutsch's credentials were important, but were a distraction from the broader issue of political control of scientific information.

"He's only a bit player," Dr. Hansen said of Mr. Deutsch. "The problem is much broader and much deeper and it goes across agencies. That's what I'm really concerned about."

"On climate, the public has been misinformed and not informed," he said. "The foundation of a democracy is an informed public, which obviously means an honestly informed public. That's the big issue here."