Barbara Finlayson-Pitts receives honorary doctorate from McGill University

The degree honors a dedication to improving air quality for millions through a career in atmospheric chemistry.

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UCI Physical Sciences Communications



Professor Barbara Finlayson-Pitts receives her honorary doctorate from McGill University.

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This year, Distinguished Professor Barbarba Finlayson-Pitts, who’s the co-director of the Atmospheric Integrated Research (AirUCI) unit at UC Irvine, received an honorary

doctorate from McGill University in Canada. It’s an honor that recognizes a career brimming with field-defining discoveries in atmospheric chemistry and the chemical processes that lead to air pollution. This includes a special focus on the interactions between air and water and air and airborne particles like aerosols. “It came out of the blue completely – and coming from one of the top Canadian universities, especially one with which I did not have a direct affiliation, was a complete surprise,” said Finlayson-Pitts. Though she has no direct affiliation with McGill, one of Finlayson-Pitts’ formative mentors, Professor Ray March, was a postdoctoral researcher there. March’s research focused on the chemistry of the upper atmosphere and the chemistry of the Northern Lights. Working with March at Trent University in Ottawa was the first time Pitts became aware that there was chemistry happening in the atmosphere. “A light went on in my head,” Finlayson-Pitts recalled, and her career track was set. “So, in some ways, receiving this honor was full circle in my career, in that Professor March’s experience at McGill ultimately led to the research I have done and back to the honorary degree at McGill.” Finlayson-Pitts traveled to McGill in June and received the degree at a graduation ceremony.

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