



Steven Mah

Dr. Larry Crouch

On a warm fall day in 2015, an oral biology professor looks to spark the interest of his dental hygiene students on the topic of molecular medicine and neurophysiology.

By the time Dr. Larry Crouch walked into his classroom, students were already waiting in their seats with their note packets open and highlighters ready go for the next two hours. It was just another lecture for Dr. Crouch, however he knew he would not be standing there that day if it were not for a science conference in Chicago back in 1981.

“There’s two different ways of getting into exercise physiology: via the physical education and then going the master’s degree route, or going the biology or biochemistry route and then to a biochemistry or physiology Ph.D.,” Crouch said.

He noticed those that gave presentations on stage went the biology and chemistry route, while those in the audience, including himself, went the physical education route. He only needed nine credit hours to complete his degree, but he knew his heart belonged somewhere else.

“I said I got to start over,” Crouch said. “So I did.”

Dr. Crouch grew up in Ansley, Nebraska, a small town that has a population of 432 people. He started his undergraduate studies at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln where he was in the physical education program. Throughout those three years he had a part-time job with the athletic department helping develop young athletes with their exercise program. Crouch primarily worked with the football team.

As a student worker, Crouch helped develop algorithms for strength acquisition. Every week he would receive each player’s workout card and from there calculate his workout numbers.

“We had back then, the late 70s early 80s, an incredibly sophisticated program in college football,” Crouch said.

Crouch finished his Bachelor of Science in biology education in 1983 and continued to work in the athletic program for two more years until heading to the University of Nebraska Medical Center in Omaha to complete a master’s program in medical sciences. After Omaha, Crouch headed down South to New Orleans where he attained a Ph.D. in medical physiology at Louisiana State University. While there he taught dental students and medical students for about five years. He finally settled on his current position in the department of Oral Biology at the College of Dentistry at UNL in 1997. His primary teaching responsibilities include physiology and pathophysiology,

which is the foundation all medical and dental students need before they further develop their education.

“It doesn’t matter whether it’s dentistry, medicine, pharmacy and even optometry, students need to understand normal physiological function and abnormal physiological function so they have a better understanding of the therapy, the medications and the treatments,” Crouch said.

Over the years Crouch has had many inclinations to devote much of his time to research. From time to time he would be interested in stress-induced immunosuppression, which is the correlation of stress and the immune system, or molecular regulation of estrogen deficient bone loss. However, from his high school days to his master program at LSU he has been very involved in teaching.

“I just found early on that I like helping people understand something that they previously didn’t understand, and I like seeing light bulbs going off over people’s heads,” Crouch said.

He recollected his days at LSU and pointed out a specific time when his reason for teaching became visible. A student was really struggling in his class Crouch said, and he continued to work with her. Crouch explains the student was from a tough background and a poor undergraduate school.

“She was smart,” Crouch said. “When she went to a college, she went to a college that I think just performed education malpractice. They improved everyone’s self esteem but they didn’t teach them the science they were supposed to.”

The student went on to practice as a physician in an area in Louisiana where would not have a physician if she had not successfully graduated Crouch said.

“She just said bottom line she would not have made it without me,” Crouch said. “From that point on I thought there’s something bigger. I’m doing something bigger. I’m actually helping the lives of the patients, which I don’t do it directly I’m doing it indirectly, but that’s ok it makes me happy. ”

Dr. David H. Shaw, chairman for the department of oral biology at the UNL College of Dentistry, first hired Crouch back in 1997. Since then many faculty and students praised Crouch’s ability to help students understand the material.

“He’s an exceptional classroom instructor,” Shaw said. “He shows a lot of enthusiasm.”

Another aspect that draws praise to Crouch is the environment he presents when he teaches. Kevin Brodersen, a second-year dental student, enjoyed Crouch’s lectures and the light-hearted environment he teaches in.

“I liked him from the very beginning,” Brodersen said. “Dr. Crouch always has a story unrelated to the subject that will help you understand the subject.”

Dr. Crouch went off topic again. A story ensued and students laughed in unison while light bulbs started to emulate around the room. Dr. Crouch knew where he belonged.