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November 6, 2008

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Professor Bruce Criley to Retire

BLOOMINGTON, Ill. – Over the years Bruce B. Criley has been with Illinois Wesleyan University, he has seen many advances in the field of biology. “What is terribly exciting about being a biologist is there is so much growth and change in the field,” said Criley. “No matter how long you teach it, you feel as though you are part of something dynamic and alive, because you are – with discoveries from DNA to genetic research.”

Criley, chair of the Illinois Wesleyan University Biology Department from 1971 to 2002, will be retiring at the end of this semester after 37 years. A winner of the University’s top teaching prize, Criley has been the George C. and Ella Beach Lewis Professor of Biology Chair for the past 29 years.

During his tenure with the University, he has watched the Biology Department grow. “Our first years here, we could invite the entire Biology Department to our house for a get together,” said Norma Criley, Bruce’s wife and a fellow Illinois Wesleyan biology instructor who retired in May. “These days we would not even have room for the seniors majoring in biology.”

Bruce Criley attended the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign (U of I), graduating with his bachelor’s and master’s degrees in zoology in 1960 and 1962, respectively. He spent the summer of 1963 studying at the Bermuda Biological Station in St. Georges, Bermuda. Criley earned his doctorate degree in zoology-embryology from the U of I in 1967. It was while at the U of I that he met his future wife, Norma, a fellow doctoral candidate.

After graduation, Criley joined the faculty of the University of Colorado, where he became associate professor of biology, chairman of the Organismic Biology Division, and associate chair of the Biology Department. He also served as the director of the Experimental Embryology-Histology Laboratory, and was awarded several Outstanding Teacher Awards.

In 1971, Criley joined the Illinois Wesleyan faculty as the chairman of the Biology Department, a position he held for 31 years. During his tenure, he worked to develop curriculum

for students pursuing medical fields and served as the chair of the Pre-Med Advisory Committee, which formed in 1972. In 1979, he was named to the George C. and Ella Beach Lewis Professor of Biology Chair.

Criley and his wife led students on travel courses for nearly 20 years, studying coastal biology in Florida and Australia. Known for his dedication to his students, in 1985 the University named Criley the Century Club winner, which was the University's top teaching prize. "We are now literally to the point where we should ask whether or not we should do what we can do," he said in his speech at the Century Club dinner, "and this is not, I submit, a completely biological question."

Throughout the years, Criley has not strayed from the controversy surrounding biology, from openly questioning the limits on stem cell research in the United States and conducting seminars on biomedical ethics, to attending a meeting at the state Capitol in 1985 that pointed out scientific inaccuracies of the anti-abortion film *Silent Scream*. "I cannot comment on whether things are right or wrong, but I can comment on whether the science is correct," said Criley.

Criley is the recipient of grants and fellowships from the National Science Foundation, as well as grants from the University of Illinois and the University of Colorado. He is a member of the American Society of Zoologists, the American Association for the Advancement of Science, the American Institute of Biological Sciences and the American Museum of Natural History.

In honor of the Crileys, former students have established the Criley Endowment Fund for the University. The fund was announced Nov. 1 at an educational symposium to celebrate the Crileys. Former students returned to speak at the symposium, including Greg Poland, a 1977 graduate and director of the Mayo Vaccine Research Group in Minnesota, and Thomas Griffith, a 1990 Illinois Wesleyan graduate and director of urological research at the University of Iowa.

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