According to colleagues and students, “innovative” is the best word to describe Kristine Krafts.

In the past 15 years, she has earned 17 Teacher of the Year awards. Since joining the Department of Diagnostic and Biological Sciences, she has directed the general histology courses in the School of Dentistry while also teaching many different pathology courses at the Duluth campus Medical School.

Krafts is known for unconventional but effective instructional techniques. In one, students learn about the immune system by acting out the roles of white blood cells and infected cells. In another, she likens elements of coagulation to various kinds of shoes.

To augment her in-class teaching, she launched a website where she puts basic course information, questions and answers, reports on clinical cases, and illustrated tips about learning pathology. One daily feature of her website is “Path Bites,” messages that keep students updated.

Despite her extensive use of technology, Krafts makes a point of stressing that most of what makes for excellent teaching is not new or trendy.

“The best teaching lays a sturdy foundation of knowledge, guides students though the sea of information in front of them, and shows them how to continue learning on their own,” she observes. A good teacher must craft “simple but complete organizational frameworks for the material.

“This is not a very glamorous part of the job. But it is essential.’’

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“There are moments in life when things just ‘click.’ In the midst of uncertainty, something happens, and suddenly everything is clear. There is tension, even confusion, and then things make sense again, perhaps in a way you hadn’t envisioned.”

Kristine P. Krafts, 2015–16 Distinguished Teacher
Postbaccalaureate, Graduate, and Professional Teaching Award