Since the fourth grade, he wanted to be an archaeologist. It only took him two more years to decide that he wanted to specialize in African archaeology.

After completing his undergraduate studies at the University of New Hampshire, he pursued his long-held passion and joined the Peace Corps to work in Sierra Leone for two years.

Christopher DoCorse, now Professor and Chair of Anthropology at the Maxwell School of Syracuse University, started at UCLA in 1981 to study African historical archaeology. He received his M.A. in 1983 and Ph.D. in 1989 from the Archaeology Program.

"It was an exciting and intellectually stimulating place to be," Chris said about the Archaeology Program, emphasizing the quality of the faculty he studied with at the time such as Merrick Posnansky (of History and Anthropology), James Sackett, Tim Baile, and James Hill (of Anthropology), and Elizabeth Carter (Professor of Near Eastern Languages & Cultures), among others.

Chris applied to the program because he thought he would find a wonderful advisor who would guide his interest in historical archaeology and Africa. Posnansky. "Merrick was a fantastic mentor. I can't imagine having gone to another program," Chris said.

For his Master's thesis, Chris used information he gathered while working in the Peace Corp in Sierra Leone. As a Peace Corp member, he was taught about the inland valley environment, rice swamp cultivation and the Kuranko language. While he was there, he supervised the construction of livestock clinics.

The Master's thesis that he completed at UCLA included Late Stone Age sites and fortified towns connected to slave trading. Funded by the Friends of Archaeology (FoA), the Corpus Institute support group, Chris was able to perform analysis and carbon dating of the sites and looked at the distribution of features in towns associated with slave raiding in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

His work for his Ph.D. focused on a different area of Africa: coastal Ghana. At the suggestion of Posnansky, Chris worked at Elmina, the site of the first and largest European trade post established in sub-Saharan Africa, where he continues to work today.

In the 1980s, Chris arrived in Ghana funded by the Fulbright Association and FoA to work on his dissertation while holding a lecturer position at the University of Ghana amidst a collapsed infrastructure due to a coup in the 1970s.

During his two-and-a-half year stay in Ghana, Chris gained valuable teaching and networking experience. He also acted as the excavation director at Elmina.

By 1987, Chris returned to the United States to finish writing his dissertation. In 1989, he went to Indiana University of Pennsylvania as an Adjunct Assistant Professor and in 1992 he left to become Assistant Professor of Anthropology at Syracuse University, where he remains today.

Chris has co-written two of the best Anthropology texts for Prentice Hall, has edited books on historical archaeology, has written more than 40 papers and is on the Editorial Board of two international journals of archaeology. He has also been highly influential in the development of diaporaan archaeology.

As his former advisor, Merrick is only proud. "Chris was my most talented and energetic student, even now he works harder than anyone I know researching in West Africa (Ghana and Sierra Leone), the Caribbean as well as in the US."

"I have a very high regard for Chris as both an archaeologist and as a human being," continued Merrick.

Chris believes that his graduate experience at UCLA was beneficial to his career path in many ways. During his formative years, Chris found the faculty to be nurturing, engaging and intellectually stimulating.

"They were accessible and gave good advice even though they were prominent in the field," Chris said. "Merrick was always fantastic at pointing you in various directions."

His experience with inspiring faculty members has influenced his teaching and mentoring of his own graduate students at Syracuse as evidenced by his recent award of the William Wasserman Prize, which recognizes outstanding graduate teaching. Chris is proud of his successful graduate students who have received about $500,000 in grants, ranging from Fulbright to NSF awards.

In the future, Chris plans on continuing to work in coastal Ghana with a recent NSF grant. An additional grant will support underwater research. While he will continue to work at Elmina, he plans to focus on other areas along Ghana's coast to look at regional settlement patterning and subsistence over the past two millennia as well as political economy in the hinterland.