

Synthetic drug may reduce heart disease

By Lauri Hopple

Graduate student Wayne Zeller has made a scientific breakthrough, right in UNL's Hamilton Hall. Zeller and assistant professor Raymond Funk have synthesized the compound dihydrocompactin, an anti-cholesterol agent which has been found to reduce the production of cholesterol in animals.

Dihydrocompactin has not been tested on humans and is not yet on the market.

This is only the second compound of four hypocholesterolemic agents that have ever been synthesized, Zeller said.

Zeller and Funk are the first in the world to synthesize dihydrocompactin.

"We actually, physically had the molecule in our hands last Friday," Funk said.

Compactin has been made by groups in Wisconsin, Japan, Indiana and at the Merck Company, a commercial chemical business.

Synthesis is the manufacture of a compound. Products of synthesis are widely used because of economic factors. Often production of large quantities of natural compounds is more expensive than production of synthesized compounds.

The problem with this, Zeller said, is finding out how to synthesize the molecule. Zeller has been working on the dihydrocompactin molecule since July of 1980. After he leaves the university a year from now, he said, Funk will continue the synthesis project with another graduate student.

"He (Funk) has done most of the thinking on this and come up with some great ideas, and I've just done most of the actual work in the lab," Zeller said.

Zeller said the decision to pursue a synthesis of hypocholesterolemic agents was made mainly because of its competitive pharmaceutical importance. He said since the molecule has potential for reducing heart disease and other cholesterol-related diseases, many groups are actively researching it.

Grants from the American Heart Foundation and the National Institute of Health have funded the project.

Zeller said he and Funk also are searching for synthetic analogues to the natural molecule. Analogues are as effective and have similar structures to the original molecule.

"This may be biased, but our synthesis is the most convergent, highest overall yield yet — the best in short," Zeller said.

Zeller said he hopes that the remaining two molecules, will be easier to synthesize now that the door has been opened through the synthesis of dihydrocompactin.



Another front-page staff photo by Joel Soretco

Faculty members in the department of military science look over this semester's teacher and course evaluations. Department chairman Lt. Col. Ramsey Rodwright couldn't be reached for comment, because the pro-freeze Daily Harassment reporter failed security clearance. See the Daily Harassment inside today's issue.

IT'S PAINFUL College's budget cuts lower morale

Editor's note: This is the final article in a three-part series examining the financial state of the College of Arts and Sciences.

By Vicki Ruhga, Mike Schmoldt and Lori Sullivan

A distinctive feature of an arts and sciences program is its need to move forward to provide leadership for the disciplines it offers.

The latest legislative budget cuts have left the college struggling to maintain existing programs and unable to consider funding any improvements.

Gerhard Meisels, interim dean of the College of Arts and Sciences, described the inevitable effects of budget constraints:

"The most painful part is to see good programs cut — to see the harmful effects that might occur in the long run. One of the most important successes of a university is constantly improving. Cuts affect morale because it makes people feel bad to see programs slipping backward instead of moving forward."

Arts and Sciences is the largest college in the university in terms of credit hours produced. Its deficit last year was

between \$300,000 and \$350,000 in its permanent budget (for expenses such as salaries and phone charges that are incurred every year) and another \$300,000 in its temporary budget (for one-time expenses).

About 0.75 percent of last year's 2 percent across-the-board cut was offset by the tuition surcharge, Meisels said.

The rest of the cut made a bad situation worse because financial resources were cut while enrollment grew, Meisels said.

Professors also have less time to keep up with current developments in their fields, are not as intellectually active and devote less time to the needs of people in the community, Meisels said.

"The solutions lie in the statehouse," Meisels said, "more than the university." Grants and contracts that bring money into the university are for research, he said, and do nothing to help meet the day-to-day functions of the college, such as teaching classes.

He said reallocating funds among various departments may be necessary with continued budget problems but he does not see how the college can cut departments.

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Photo by John Goecke

Sharifah Shaline Syed Abdullah

Malaysian film star finds privacy, cool climate in friendly city of Lincoln

By Marcia Warkentin

Movie stars on campus for the filming of "Terms of Endearment" have added excitement to the last few weeks of school. But few students know about a real movie star who is a student at UNL.

Sharifah Shalina Syed Abdullah (Shasha to her friends), a freshman marketing major from Malaysia, received the award for best supporting actress in the 1980 Asian Film Festival.

Shasha, 22, said her first experience in front of the camera was a crowd scene for a TV drama when she was 12 years old. When she was 18, she had a small part in another drama.

At 19, she was picked from about 300 people to play the lead in "Atik Manja" (Pampered Baby), a movie about a girl's school.

"It was kind of an overnight success for me and everyone who was involved in the movie," Shasha said.

The movie made more money than any other in Malaysia up to that time, she said.

In 1980, Shasha was awarded best supporting actress for her role in the movie at the Asian Film Festival, which included 40 movies from 13 countries. She said she didn't even attend the festival, which was in Jakarta, Indonesia, because she didn't expect to win.

"I appreciated it," she said, "but I thought I shouldn't be awarded yet because it was only my first

movie."

Shasha then worked with Syed-Kechik Film Productions in Malaysia, acting and working with the crew behind the camera. She played a small part in another movie and had parts in 10 TV dramas.

The company had offered her scholarship to attend acting school in America, but as there was some delay, she decided to continue her schooling as soon as possible. She was accepted into universities in Ohio and Hawaii, but chose UNL, she said, because she wanted to experience a colder climate, which Malaysia doesn't have. She loves Lincoln, she said.

"I think the people here are more friendly than in my country," she said. "People say 'hi' everywhere; you don't find that in my country."

Although she plans to take theater classes and possibly act in some plays at UNL, Shasha said she wants to be treated like any other student. In Malaysia, she had no privacy, she said.

"I felt free when I came here," she said. "Back home I used to wear sunglasses."

Shasha plans to return to Malaysia after she graduates and continue working in the movie industry. Her dream is to be a director, she said.

Acting is not as glamorous as it seems, she said. The only time she felt overwhelmed was the first time she appeared on screen.

"When people appreciated your acting, that's when it's worth it," she said, "not the publicity and glamour."