

# NU to build underground field lab

By Gene Gentrup

A lab designed to study roots of turf plants will be constructed at the NU Field Laboratory at Mead, said Bob Wesley, research assistant at the UNL Department of Horticulture. Wesley said the under-

ground structure, also referred to as a Rhizotron lab, will be the third built in the United States for turf-plant study. Other Rhizotron buildings used in turf study are at Texas A&M University and Ohio State University. Wesley said the first known Rhizotron lab was constructed at Kemp, England in 1963.

Bob Carpenter, architect for the lab, is currently taking bids for the building's construction. He said the cost will not exceed \$100,000. "The \$100,000 figure

also includes instruments, data computers and weather machinery," he said.

The NU Foundation is funding the lab.

Wesley said the proposals for the lab were presented to the Foundation's Laymen Fund Giant Source by Robert Shearman, UNL associate professor of horticulture. Shearman is on vacation and could not be reached for comment.

Wesley said the underground building will allow "direct observation of the plant's rooting system." He said the plants are rooted in small, transparent boxes called rooting cells. The cells can be taken out and the test soil replaced with a different test type.

The studies, which Wesley said will begin as early as the spring of 1985, will benefit turf grasses culturally, environmentally and from the soil-factor standpoint.

"The cultural method in these studies will be used for the effect of mowing and fertilization of grasses on a common lawn," Wesley said. "The environmental method will study how grass roots react during the different seasons of the year. The soil-testing method will include how water use differs in different soils."

Though the studies will be time-consuming and fairly costly, Wesley said it is hoped that the project will generate more support, funds and grants.

# Students falling below average grade of 'C' may lose financial aid

By Jim Berryman

College students who receive low grades may soon be denied financial aid if a bill pending before Congress is passed.

The bill, proposed by Sen. Don Nickels, R-Okla., would cut off federal financial aid to students who are unable to maintain at least a C grade average in their college courses.

"It seems to me that setting a C average to determine who receives financial aid may not be the best way to proceed," Don Aripoli, director of scholarships and financial aid at UNL, said.

The bill was launched as a result of a study conducted last year by the General Accounting Office for the Senate Labor and Human Resources Committee. The study found that 20 percent of college students receiving federal aid graduate with an average below a C.

The number of UNL students affected by the bill could be quite substantial, Aripoli said. Approximately 15,000 UNL students will be receiving federal financial aid this fall, he said.

### Students must earn D

Under the current UNL policy, students must earn a D or better in at least 50 percent of their classes to be eligible for financial aid. About 1,200 students currently are exempt from receiving aid because of these requirements.

State Sen. Tom Vickers of Farnam is also against the proposed bill. Equal concern must be given to both lower and higher achievers, he said.

"It sounds as if Uncle Sam is only concerned in helping those with an above C average," Vickers said. "I'm afraid of what would happen to those with a below C average."

Vickers said if the bill becomes law, the pressures of doing well may eventually encourage students to take simpler, less challenging courses to avoid falling below a C average.

"A person who is trying hard and getting a 2.5 is the same thing as a person who is getting a 3.5 easily," Vickers said.

### Warner disagrees

Sen. Jerome Warner of Waverly doesn't agree. Warner said expecting a student to maintain a C average is reasonable, but only after the student has been in college for two years. Students, he said, need a chance to make the transition from high school to college.

Warner's opinion is similar to the bill pending in Congress. The bill would allow students one year to develop good study habits. If they didn't have a C average by then, they would get another grading period to bring their grade up. If then the student's average was still below a C, the financial aid would be dropped.


"There is an importance in having better grades," Warner said. If a student is getting Ds he may be in the wrong field.

"The bill provides the right incentive for students to try harder," he said.

Vickers said if the bill is passed, the improvement in higher education will be minimal and it would prevent many people from going to college.

"It's a nice simplistic idea," he said. "But it wouldn't work in the end."

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