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Virologist appointed UNL genetics chair

By Deb McAdams
Editor

Top executives of the 3M Corporation, including former chairman and CEO Lew Lehr, were at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln Tuesday to announce the appointment of a nationally recognized AIDS researcher to the 3M/Lew Lehr Endowed Chair in Genetics at UNL.

In a ceremony at the Wick Alumni Center, Charles Wood, currently head of the Division of Neurovirology at the University of Miami, was appointed to the position, pending approval by the Board of Regents. He will take the position at the George W. Beadle Center for Biotechnology Research when the center opens next year. The chair was created by a \$1 million donation from 3M Corporation.

Jack Morris, director of the UNL School of Biological Sciences, said 3M wasn't directly involved in genetics research, and there were no strings attached to the endowment. The corporation's selection of UNL for the endowment was Lehr's decision.

"3M traditionally provides an endowment for the retiring CEO," Morris said.

Lehr, a native of Elgin, earned a chemical engineering degree at the University of Nebraska. He advocated curiosity-based research and recognized the importance of genetic research, Morris said. Lehr's interest in research and his support of UNL allowed the university to attract Wood, who has done significant research about HIV, the virus that causes AIDS.

Wood said he accepted the position at UNL because it provided an "opportunity to build a program and to attract other investigators to the center."

Much of Wood's focus as the genetics chair will be on HIV. Wood said he has been involved in HIV research since the virus was discovered and has helped engineer products used to screen blood.

Creating a solid foundation for his program will be one of Wood's main goals.

Besides studying HIV, he has done

genetic research on a bovine immunodeficiency virus, Vice Chancellor for Research Priscilla Grew said.

"His research involves both human and animal viruses. We see this as an ideal thing because he'll bring together research from east campus and city campus," she said.

Grew's office is promoting research linkages between all of UNL's campuses, and the nature of Wood's work will help strengthen the research relationship between UNL and UNMC, she said.

"There is strong HIV research at UNMC," Morris said. "For the past 2 or 3 years, we've had an informal virologists meeting between campuses. There will be opportunities with the Beadle Center to bring all of the areas of virology together."

"Recruiting someone like Dr. Wood is very important," he said. "He's not exclusively an AIDS virologist. He works on the molecular biology of HIV as well as the bovine immunodeficiency virus. A key here is the kind of research we expect to do in the Beadle Center is how human and animal genes work."

Wood will also bring more grant opportunities to UNL.

"The major funding at UNL is from the USDA, but that is shrinking. We need to bring researchers in like Charles Wood so we can bring in funding from other agencies," Morris said. "He has grants to work on HIV and the human herpes virus in excess of \$1 million."

Most of that funding is from the National Cancer Institute and from the National Institute of Health. According to the 1992-93 Annual Report of the Office of Sponsored Programs, UNL received no funding from either of these agencies last year.

More grant opportunities may mean more researchers, and the strength of UNL's program is based on the research community, Morris said.

"Our institution isn't big enough or strong enough to be a number one research university, but we can have areas of excellence," he said. "We're getting there."



Larry Freeland sails away his afternoon at Holmes Lake.

Jason Levkulich/DN

Earth to catch glimpse of comet colliding with Jupiter

By Paula Lavigne
Staff Reporter

With the force of 200,000 megatons of dynamite, a comet traveling 130,000 miles per hour will collide with Jupiter on July 16, resulting in an explosion more spectacular than even the largest nuclear bomb could ever pro-

duce.

Erik Hubble, a supervisor at Hyde Observatory located in Holmes Park and member of the Prairie Astronomy Club, said the collision would be "more than anything man has ever seen or witnessed before."

The comet, named Shoemaker-Levy 9 after its discoverers Eugene and Carolyn Shoemaker and David

Levy, approached Jupiter in 1992 and was trapped within the planet's gravitational pull and ripped into 21 pieces.

Compared to a giant "dirty snowball" with a core of ice, snow and debris, the comet, with its trail of dust and gas, is about four kilometers in length.

Its pieces are joined like a train that

will intermittently hit the solar system's largest planet beginning July 16 and ending July 22. As spectacular a phenomenon as this might be, Hubble said, very little to none of the impact will be seen from Earth.

The comet will strike the planet on its backside from Earth's point of view, Hubble said, and since Jupiter is such a large planet, 144,810 kilome-

ters in diameter, the comet is too small to be seen. However, backyard stargazers are not completely out of luck.

"Jupiter has a nine hour and 50 minute rotation, so during an eight to 18 minute time span, Jupiter will rotate around so we can see the area where they would have impacted," he

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