Materials scientist Zhengmao Li has been named manager of protein/peptide delivery programs at Bentley Pharmaceuticals Inc., a hiring that lays the groundwork for a future collaboration between the Exeter-based company and the University of New Hampshire.

Li, who received his Ph.D. from UNH earlier this year, is “a perfect fit,” said Robert J. Gyurik, Bentley’s vice president of pharmaceutical development. “Zhengmao came to us fully formed, and he’s already translating our needs into new technology.”

As a graduate student at UNH, Li studied intranasal insulin delivery under materials science Professor Yvon Durant, a project jointly sponsored by the university, the New Hampshire Industrial Research Center, and Bentley.

“At UNH, students can build lifelong relationships with faculty who are conducting cutting-edge research,” Li said.

The college’s Center to Advance Molecular Interaction Science (CAMIS) serves the pharmaceutical, biotechnology and materials science industries through the development of tools and techniques to characterize and control the interaction of biological molecules.

“The biggest thing we can offer Bentley is the collaborations we provide,” said William Trumble, dean of the College of Life Sciences and Agriculture. “We have an environment in which we can pull in areas of expertise—for example, our genomics center, the use of robotics to develop chip technology, immunology and endocrinomics.”

According to James R. Murphy, president and chief executive officer of Bentley, “as a New Hampshire company, we appreciate that our state university can provide us with outstanding resources.” The company, he said, recently collaborated with UNH testing an intranasal spray as an alternative form of insulin delivery.

UNH President Ann Weaver Hart said the university “is committed to the production of knowledge that addresses scientific needs in today’s world, and one way we fulfill this mission is through deep and reciprocal relationships such as the one we recognize with Bentley.”

“As a New Hampshire company, we appreciate that our state university can provide us with outstanding resources,” said James R. Murphy, chairman, president, and CEO for Bentley.

John Aber, vice president for research and public service at the university, said one key is that “we don’t create barriers between
our research groups. Our relationship with Bentley is an excellent example of the kind of public-private partnership that UNH is creating. Our interaction with Bentley brings new resources and energy to the process of discovery that is a core UNH mission.”