

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Photonics industry survey results indicate 2,100 new photonics technicians needed over the next year in the U.S.

WACO, Texas (September 22, 2009)– Dan Hull, Executive Director of the National Center for Optics and Photonics Education (OP-TEC), today announced the official release of the survey results from its 2009 industry survey of U.S. photonics technician employers.

The survey, conducted at the University of North Texas Survey Research Center, has identified more than 2,100 current jobs for photonics technicians that need to be filled this year. This need will increase by 5,900 more new jobs over the next five years. Employers polled for this survey in early 2009 – at the height of the current recession - said that jobs for photonics techs were available and not being filled. The average starting salary exceeds \$39,000. Salaries for two-year graduates holding an Associate in Applied Science degree (the preferred degree) are even higher.

Photonics technicians, educated and trained at U.S. community colleges, are proficient in the scientific principles of optics, fiber-optics and lasers, and the processes and equipment incorporating these devices in electronic and electro-optics systems used for manufacturing, defense, homeland security, medical equipment, telecommunications, environmental monitoring, lighting, displays and entertainment.

The study, commissioned by OP-TEC, surveyed 3,989 U.S. employers; a sample of 636 responded, resulting in the projections with a margin of error of ± 3.48 percent. Major findings of the study included the following:

Major Findings	
1	The number of photonics technicians currently employed in the United States is estimated to be 19,785.
2	There is an estimated need for 2,194 additional photonics technicians over the next year.
3	Across the photonics industry, the greatest need for photonics technicians is in the areas of (a) research and development and (b) production and manufacturing.
4	Currently 33% of respondents employ photonics technicians who have earned high school diplomas or less. Less than 30% of respondents employ photonics technicians who have associate degrees, and 38% of respondents employ photonics technicians who have bachelor’s degrees.
5	Nearly half of respondents would prefer to hire photonics technicians with associate degrees, 30% of respondents would prefer to hire photonics technicians with bachelor’s degrees, and less than 20% of respondents would prefer to hire photonics technicians with high school diplomas only.
6	The average annual salary of entry-level photonics technicians is estimated to be \$39,082.
7	The number of Precision Optics Technicians (another career) in the workforce is estimated to be 6,188 with a five-year demand of 3,100 additional technicians.

In a separate study conducted this past year, OP-TEC identified twenty eight, two-year colleges with photonics programs in the U.S. These programs currently graduate less than 250 techs per year (less than 15% of the demand.) OP-TEC’s goal is to help colleges meet this employment demand by starting new programs and increasing the enrollments at colleges where photonics education is currently offered.

For more information about OP-TEC or the industry survey results, please visit www.op-tec.org.

About OP-TEC

The National Center for Optics and Photonics Education, OP-TEC, is a consortium of two-year colleges, high schools, universities, national laboratories, industry partners, and professional societies funded by the National Science Foundation's Advanced Technological Education (ATE) program. The participating entities of OP-TEC have joined forces to create a secondary-to-postsecondary "pipeline" of highly qualified and strongly motivated students and to empower high schools and community colleges to meet the urgent need for technicians in optics and photonics.

This material is based on work supported by the National Science Foundation under Grant No. NSF/DUE 0603275. Any opinions, findings, and conclusions or recommendations expressed in this material are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of the National Science Foundation.

Contact

Dan Hull, Executive Director
324B Kelly Drive
Waco, TX 76710
Office: 254-741-8338 x332
Mobile: 254-744-2805
Fax: 254-399-6581
E-mail: hull@op-tec.org
Web: www.op-tec.org

###