FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Photonics industry survey results indicate 1,500 new photonics technicians needed over the next year in the U.S.

WACO, Texas (August 13, 2012) – Dan Hull, Executive Director of the National Center for Optics and Photonics Education (OP-TEC), has announced the official release of the results from the center’s 2012 Industry Demand for Two-Year College Graduates in Optics and Photonics Technology survey of 4,217 U.S. photonics technician employers.

The survey, conducted at the University of North Texas Survey Research Center, has identified more than 1,500 jobs for two-year degreed photonics technicians that need to be filled this year. This need is expected to increase by 4,100 more new jobs over the next five years. Employers polled for this survey in early 2012 said that jobs for photonics techs were available and not being filled. The average starting salary exceeds $41,000 for two-year photonics graduates holding an Associate in Applied Science degree.

Photonics technicians, educated and trained at U.S. community and technical 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 in numerous and diverse fields such as alternate energy, manufacturing, health care, telecommunications, environmental monitoring, homeland security, aerospace, lighting, displays, and entertainment.

Key findings of the study included the following estimates:

- 19,128 photonics technicians with two-year degrees are currently employed in the U.S.
- 1,592 additional photonics technicians with two-year degrees are needed next year; 4,115 will be needed over the next five years.
- Employer demand for photonics technicians with two-year degrees has increased since 2009, whereas the national unemployment rate has remained above 8%.
- A large gap exists between the demand and the supply of completers from two-year colleges.
- The average entry level salary for photonics technicians with two-year degrees is $41,137; a 5% increase from 2009.
- Over 1,000 U.S. employers are interested in further education for their employed photonics technicians.

The thirty, two-year colleges with photonics programs in the U.S currently graduate 250-300 technicians per year (approximately 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 and to download a complimentary copy of the summary report, please visit www.op-tec.org/2012survey.
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.

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