University: The University of Arizona

**SPECIAL PROGRAM FEES**

**FEE REQUEST**

**College/School:** College of Optical Sciences

**Department:** College of Optical Sciences

**Program:** Distance Learning Program

**Is this a graduate or an undergraduate program fee?**

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<th>GRADUATE PROGRAM</th>
<th>UNDERGRADUATE PROGRAM</th>
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**Is this a new fee or an increase to an existing fee?**

| NEW FEE | Amount requested: $450 per unit per unit of academic credit, for distance program students only, enrolled in Optical Sciences courses offered via the Optical Sciences distance program, effective Fall 2008 |

| EXISTING FEE | Current Fee: $____________ | Requested Fee: $____________ |

**BACKGROUND:**

When the College of Optical Sciences planned its Meinel Building Expansion, the College made efforts, with externally-funded support, to equip one of its classrooms with a control room and audio/video/computer equipment that allows the College to record and then web-stream its graduate programs (certificate programs and graduate degree programs) to students located in companies anywhere around the globe.

Making these programs available to a global audience, including maintaining the audio/video equipment and the computer servers that provide web streaming of the classes, handling distribution and collection of weekly homework and of exams, maintaining records and answering questions from distance students, and running course chat room discussions, requires a special program fee.

The fee request has been reviewed and approved at the College and University level.

**DISCUSSION:**

**Quality and Benefits of the Program and Market Pricing:** The students enrolled in our distance program are working professional engineers who would not otherwise be able to take university classes in optics at all, and they are eager to take the classes because it gives them an opportunity to significantly broaden their skills and thereby obtain promotions and increased salaries. There is no other optics distance program for working engineers anywhere in the United States.

The University of Arizona and the College of Optical Sciences also benefit from the distance program because some of the distance students come to the UA as on-campus students to complete their graduate degrees. As an international front-runner in optical sciences education, the College extends through its distance delivery the excellence of its academic offerings to students – both traditional students and professionals in the workplace – who
are otherwise place-bound. Benefits accrue not only to the individual students enrolled in the distance program but also to the companies who sponsor them. There is no other optics distance program for working engineers anywhere in the United States.

**Access and Affordability:** There are currently about 70 - 90 students per semester enrolled in our distance program courses. In concert with ABOR policy and University of Arizona practice, 15% of the program fee will be reserved for students demonstrating financial need. In practical terms, however, the College notes that the financial impact of the fee upon the students themselves will be minimal because their employers rather than the students pay the entire amount of tuition and fees.

**Student Consultation:** The tuition and additional program fees for the distance program courses have been discussed with a number of representatives from our industrial affiliate companies, as they are the source for the great majority of our distance students. The companies understand very well the increased costs associated with distance learning courses, and they have raised no objections to the program fee.

**Cost to Deliver the Distance Program:** Offering and sustaining high-quality distance-delivery courses requires additional costs, beyond traditional campus-based delivery, and these costs should not be borne by the on-campus student. For example, the College will need to support the operational and specialized personnel expenses to maintain the audio/video equipment and the computer servers that provide web streaming of the classes, to handle the distribution and collection of weekly homework and of exams, to maintain records and answer questions from distance students, and to run course chat room discussions. The program fee, for the distance program students only, will be assessed on a per-unit basis, at $450 per unit of academic credit.

**Increased earning capacity:** Distance students who complete either the Professional Graduate Certificate in Optical Sciences or the M.S. in Optical Sciences should expect to have their earnings increase significantly. For example, the average starting salary of an engineer with a B.S. in Optical Sciences and Engineering is currently about $63,500, while the starting salary of an engineer with an M.S. in Optical Sciences receives an average starting salary of about $86,500. An engineer receiving the Graduate Certificate can expect to receive a starting salary roughly midway between the above values, i.e., about $75,000.

**Accountability:** The college will prepare an annual report of program fee revenues and expenditures for review according to applicable ABOR and university procedures.

**RECOMMENDATION:**
The University of Arizona recommends ABOR approval to implement a special program fee of $450 per unit of academic credit, for distance program students only, enrolled in Optical Sciences courses offered via the Optical Sciences distance program, effective Fall 2008.