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To: Nevada State Board of Dispensing Opticians

From: Scott Helkaa, Program Director, Ophthalmic Technology Programs, Community College of Southern Nevada.

RE: Educational Opportunities for Optician Trainees outside of Las Vegas

In order to ensure that all individuals who are interested in becoming an optician have equal access to training, the Ophthalmic Technology program at the Community College of Southern Nevada has implemented the following training modalities.

- 1) **Compressed Video Courses.** The program is making use of interactive video course system as set up by the University and Community College System of Nevada. This allows the program to make use of special classrooms, which enables the instructor of the course to be broadcast to a variety of host sites. There are currently 78 host sites located in the metropolitan centers of Reno and Las Vegas as well as outlying locations such as Elko, Hawthorne, Minden, Pahrump, Tonapah, Winnemucca, and Yerington.

Any individual who lives within driving distance of one of these sites can attend the courses by using the specialized equipment available. The student has two-way access using this modality. The student will see the instructor of the course in real time on a special monitor. The student will receive the exact same training as students who are in the primary classroom. The student and the instructor have visual and audio two-way communications available. The student may ask a question and the instructor will hear the question as well as see the student on a special monitor in the instructors room. The instructor can then address the question. Information, audio and visual, is broad-cast to all involved sites at the same time.

The program is currently offering compressed courses. Additional courses will be available using this format for the Fall 2003 and Spring 2004 semesters.

- 2) **Internet Course Work.** The program is also making use of the latest Internet training software and system provided by the University and Community College System of Nevada. This allows any individual who has access to the Internet to take the ophthalmic core courses. Students may access this course work through the use of personal computers, as well as any computer that is available at local libraries and educational institutions. The Internet option is also backed up with the use of local tutors. Program faculty will meet with the Internet students on a regular basis during the semester at a mutually convenient location and time. This allows the Internet student to obtain some one on one or small group accesses to an instructor in order to clarify any difficulties with the course work. This Internet program is a direct outcome of a national effort in opticianry to provide distance education opportunities and is sponsored in part by the National Federation of Opticianry Schools. Course work in the Internet program was designed as a joint effort between all NFOS optical schools and is an exact copy of what is done in the more traditional classroom settings.

The program is currently offering Internet courses. Additional courses will be available using this format for the Fall 2003 and Spring 2004 semesters.

EXHIBIT H Senate Committee on Commerce/Labor

Date: 4/29/03 Page 1 of 2

- 3) **CD-ROM and Video Library.** The program is currently taping every lecture for each of the ophthalmic courses. These tapes will also be converted to CD-ROM format. The videos and CD-ROMs will be duplicated and held on reserve at various libraries located across the state. These materials are meant to augment the instruction the student receives via compressed video, internet, or traditional classroom settings. In special cases these items may be sent directly to a student. These items are currently being developed and made accessible through the Clark County Library – CCSN West Charleston Campus in Las Vegas and the Truckee Meadows Community College Library in Reno. The program is currently seeking other key locations across the state, to house these resources.
- 4) **Reference texts and other Resources.** The program has used the generous donation of the Nevada State Board of Dispensing Opticians to obtain a selection of ophthalmic related reference texts. These texts have been placed on reserve with the Truckee Meadows Community College Library and the Clark County Library – West Charleston Campus Branch. Maintenance and expansion of these resources will be funded by any additional donations received from the Board, private practitioners, ophthalmic related corporations and the programs annual operations budget. The program will also seek out grant opportunities, which will expand these resources. The program is also currently identifying additional library sites across the state to house these resources.
- 5) **Program Faculty.** The program is currently staffed by a program director and six part time instructors. All instructors are practicing professionals in the ophthalmic field. All instructors are Nevada licensed opticians, and in most cases, are also currently ABO and NCLE certified. Each instructor has at least 15 years experience in the ophthalmic field. The program director and faculty also have exemplified their commitment to education by obtaining baccalaureate and master's degrees in education and their related field of specialty. The program has identified additional individuals who live in key markets that have appropriate qualifications to teach ophthalmic related courses. These individuals will be used as local tutors.

All faculty members are available to the students during normal course hours and office hours. Faculty members are also available to the students via e-mail, telephone and by special arrangements with the instructor.

The Community College of Southern Nevada, (CCSN), offers a two-year associate degree in Ophthalmic Technology – Dispensing Optician Emphasis. This program is accredited by the Commission of Opticianry Accreditation.

Students who are enrolled in the program may obtain their ophthalmic course work training via the options previously mentioned. The student may obtain their general education course work from any recognized institution, which is a member of the University and Community College System of Nevada. Many of the institutions within the system offer their general education course work via compressed video and internet options as well as the traditional classroom setting.

The program also evaluates general education course work completed at other institutions of higher education located outside of the state of Nevada as per the University and Community College System of Nevada guidelines.

Attached to this correspondence you will find: (1) A copy of the University and Community College System of Nevada Interactive Video Host Sites, and (2) A current copy of the two year associate degree program in Ophthalmic Technology as offered by the Community College of Southern Nevada.

As always, If you have any questions or concerns on the education of current and potential opticians in Nevada. Please call me at (702) 651-5834. My E-mail address is scott_helkaa@ccsn.nevada.edu. My office is located at CCSN, 6375 West Charleston Blvd, W1-A Las Vegas Nevada, 89146.