

UA College of Optical Sciences Names New Dean

By Kristin Waller, College of Optical Sciences,
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Optoelectronics expert Thomas L. Koch will replace Dean James C. Wyant.

Thomas L. Koch, director of the Center for Optical Technologies at Lehigh University in Bethlehem, Pa., has been chosen to serve as the second dean of the University of Arizona [College of Optical Sciences](#), formerly the Optical Sciences Center. He will replace founding dean James C. Wyant, who has served 13 years as both director and dean. Koch, who currently holds the Daniel E. '39 and Patricia M. Smith Chair and serves as professor of electrical and computer engineering and of physics at Lehigh, said, "It's truly a great honor and privilege to be asked, and I am excited and pleased to be joining such a fantastic community of leaders in the field."



Thomas L. Koch



James C. Wyant

After receiving a bachelor's degree in physics from Princeton University in 1977 and a doctorate in applied physics from the California Institute of Technology in 1982, Koch worked for 13 years at Bell Laboratories in Holmdel, N.J., where he led research and prototyping of semiconductor lasers and advanced photonic devices for optical communications.

From 1995-96, Koch was vice president of research and development at SDL Inc., before he returned to Bell Labs and Lucent Technologies to become chief technical officer of optoelectronic products and director of semiconductor photonics research.

In 2000, he became vice president of technology platforms at Lucent and then Agere Systems, where he managed the research and development of optoelectronics and integrated circuit devices during the telecommunications boom. Koch stepped into his current role at Lehigh in 2003.

Koch's research interests have focused on semiconductor optoelectronics and optical fiber communications, including photonic integrated circuits and recently silicon photonics.

He holds 36 patents and has authored more than 335 papers and presentations.

He is a member of the National Academy of Engineering and a fellow of IEEE, the Optical Society and Bell Laboratories. In 1990, he won the IEEE Photonics Society's Distinguished Lecturer Award and in 1991 their William Streifer Award for Scientific Achievement. He was awarded IEEE's Eric E. Sumner Award in 2008 for pioneering contributions to optoelectronics and optical communications.

"I look forward to supporting the college and the University of Arizona in advancing the basic science of optics and in creating and commercializing new technologies. There are huge opportunities for high-impact, high-value engineering solutions that will benefit us all in application areas as diverse as imaging, sensing, defense, biomedicine, energy, communications and entertainment," Koch said. "The future is bright indeed."

Koch will join a distinguished group when he takes the helm. Previous directors include Aden B. Meinel, Peter A. Franken, Robert R. Shannon and Richard C. Powell.

Et Cetera

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The current dean, James C. Wyant, was appointed director of the Optical Sciences Center in 1999 and was named dean when it became the College of Optical Sciences in 2005. An engineer and entrepreneur, Wyant is renowned in the field for his groundbreaking work in interferometry and optical testing.

"Tom Koch is the caliber of dean that I dreamed we would get," Wyant said of his successor. "Like many of our faculty, he holds both academic and industry experience that will prove invaluable. The College of Optical Sciences will have a great future under Tom's leadership."

Koch's term will begin on Jan. 1.