Founding Optical Sciences Dean Jim Wyant Steps Down

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Jim Wyant, director and founding dean of the College of Optical Sciences, was feted Tuesday during a reception marking his decision to step down and return to teaching.

"I've had a lot of fun," he told the assembled crowd of colleagues and notables. "There's no doubt but that this is the best job in optics in the world."

The College of Optical Sciences, regarded as one of the world's premier optical institutes, was founded in 1964 as the Optical Sciences Center. Wyant became the center's director in 1999 and was named dean when it became a college in 2005.

Famously devoted to Wildcats basketball, Wyant was presented with basketball memorabilia by coach Sean Miller, former coach Lute Olson and UA Athletics Director Greg Byrne.

Olson pointed out that Wyant has had season UA basketball tickets since 1985 and thanked him for supporting the program.

UA President Emeritus Peter Likins told Wyant he has left quite a legacy at the UA.

"You'll always be the guy who got it done," he said.

The college's new dean, Jim Koch, said he was pleased to see that optics leaders from around the country came to recognize Wyant's contributions.

Among those were Eugene Arthurs, CEO of SPIE, the international society for optics and photonics, and Elizabeth Rogan, CEO of the Optical Society of America.

"He has been a model in every dimension of leadership," Koch said. "Academic programs, research programs... but also the human dimension."

Wyant is a member of the National Academy of Engineering and a fellow of OSA, SPIE and the Optical Society of India. He was president of SPIE in 2006 and of OSA in 2010.

He has received numerous awards, and he founded WYKO Corp., serving as its president and board chairman from 1984 to 1997. He also founded 4D Technology Corp. and currently serves as its board chairman.

With more than 100 publications to his name, Wyant is an undisputed expert in the fields of interference, diffraction and optical testing.

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