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THOUSANDS OF ONLINE STUDENTS FROM ACROSS THE GLOBE TO DESCEND ON PHOENIX FOR GRADUATION CEREMONY

PHOENIX, July 26, 2006 – The university that has helped nearly a quarter-million working students complete their college education will welcome more than 5,000 members of its class of 2006 to Phoenix for three graduation ceremonies held on July 28 and July 29. University of Phoenix's upcoming graduation services are specially designed for the thousands of students who pursue their education online, and will be attended by graduates from all 50 states. More than 150 graduates are from outside the U.S.; representing 36 countries and five continents, these world travelers will give the ceremony an international flavor.

Because the students attend class completely online, the graduation ceremony will be the first opportunity for many of them to meet their classmates and professors face-to-face.

"Emotions often run high at graduation," said Vince Grell, the vice president at University of Phoenix who oversees the online campus. "Being able to watch as thousands of students come together to receive their diplomas, meet for the first time, embrace their professors, and celebrate a major life accomplishment is one of the best parts of being involved with this great University."

In addition to awarding more than 5,000 bachelor's, master's and doctoral degrees, the University will award its first-ever honorary doctorate of humane letters degree to Roland Hemond, one of the most respected and experienced executives in Major League Baseball and executive advisor for the Chicago White Sox. During his 54-year career in the major leagues, Hemond has been named Executive of the Year three times and has a track record of improving rosters through savvy front office management. Off the field, Hemond is a tireless advocate for higher education, encouraging players – including current, aspiring and retired pros – to complete their college education to prepare for life after baseball. Hemond has worked closely with University of Phoenix to help make education readily available to players in the major and

minor leagues. Hemond's honorary degree will be conferred during the Saturday morning graduation ceremony.

Graduates at each ceremony will be treated to a congratulatory video featuring inspirational messages from U.S. Senator John McCain, Arizona Gov. Janet Napolitano, Phoenix Suns Chairman and CEO Jerry Colangelo, NFL Hall of Famer Troy Aikman, FOX Sports' "Best Damn Sports Show's" Tom Arnold and Chris Rose, U.S. Health and Human Services Secretary Mike Leavitt, US Airways President and CEO Doug Parker, and Men's Wearhouse Chairman and CEO George Zimmer.

Arthur Levine, president and education professor at the Teachers College at Columbia University, will give a commencement address focusing on the challenges and opportunities facing this generation of educational pioneers. Dr. Levine is the author of dozens of articles and books, including the noted *When Hope and Fear Collide: A Portrait of Today's College Student*.

Each of the three graduation ceremonies will be held at the US Airways Center in downtown Phoenix. To accommodate the large number of graduates and their guests, ceremonies will be held Friday, July 28th at 10:30 a.m. and Saturday, July 29th at 10:30 a.m. and 5 p.m.

University of Phoenix, working in the service of the nation for 30 years, has a mission to provide access to higher education opportunities that enable students to develop the knowledge and skills necessary to achieve their professional goals, improve the productivity of their organizations, and provide leadership and service to their communities. The University is the largest private accredited university in North America and is owned by parent company Apollo Group, Inc. As of May 31, 2006, 323,133 students attend Apollo Group, Inc., institutions. The University's focus on small interactive classes, highly personalized teaching and comprehensive academic accountability systems has won praise and recognition by noteworthy academic and business leaders. The University is accredited by The Higher Learning Commission and is a member of the North Central Association.

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