Students hang up phone, sign on to IM

By Tessa Hill

Every morning, Crystal Alkais begins her day not by eating breakfast, showering and brushing her teeth, but by signing on to her America Online Instant Messenger account.

Alkais, a pre-business freshman, said she uses AIM daily to talk to her family in Phoenix and friends who live down the hall.

The use of instant messaging through AOL and other providers like Yahoo and Microsoft Network has become increasingly popular as an inexpensive and often free way for college students to exchange instant text messages with friends and family, whether nearby or across the country.

“I sign on in the morning as soon as I wake up. I start my day with Instant Message and brush my teeth, eat breakfast and go straight to class,” said Alkais.

“I’ve met a lot of people through Instant Message. It’s a lot easier than calling them every time you want to talk to them,” Alkais added.

Hike may increase graduate dropouts

By Tacie Holyoak

The results of a graduate student survey distributed early this month are in, just in time to be presented to the Arizona Board of Regents at today’s tuition hearing.

The numbers show that 11 percent of 500 students surveyed are considering dropping out if tuition is raised — 5 percent temporarily and 6 percent permanently. Forty percent said they will drop the number of semester units they take.

Based on the survey results, 550 — to 600 of UA’s 8,000 graduate students could permanently drop out, said Pete Morris, president of the Graduate and Professional Student Council.

“That’s a hell of a lot of money for the university to lose,” Morris said at Tuesday’s GPSC meeting.

When so many students drop out, he added, the university loses money that could be set aside for need-based financial aid.

Although Morris believes the university will lose money, he said, it would solidify Tucson as “Optics Valley.”

The numbers show that 11 percent of 500 graduate students, or up to 550, may never complete their degree.

Based on the survey results, 550 — to 600 of UA’s 8,000 graduate students could permanently drop out, said Pete Morris, president of the Graduate and Professional Student Council.

“When so many students drop out, he said, the university will lose money that could be set aside for need-based financial aid.

However, what was supposed to be a full-fledged construction site in the nexus of Optics Valley remains the small dirt patch construction workers dug six months ago.

Construction plans for the Meinel optical sciences addition, located at North Cherry Avenue and East University Boulevard, recently came to a halt when contractors’ initial bids eclipsed the $17.2 million budget set for the project.

The budget setbacks will push the expansion’s projected opening from August to November at the soonest, said May Carr, project manager for the optical sciences building.

“Retail bids are higher than we are budgeted,” said Melissa Dryden, public information coordinator for facilities design and construction.

“We are re-examining to make cuts where we can without changing the design,” she said.

Members of the department of optical sciences say Meinel is crowded for space. The 47,000 square-foot addition would nearly double the size of the building.

“We are really in need of space and the new facilities, so we are definitely disappointed it’s been pushed back,” said John Greivenkamp, an optical sciences professor and the user representative to the architectural team.

Dryden said that facilities design and construction has put forth a “big effort” to tight-