"Diversity" is the word I would choose to describe this issue of THE WRITING LAB NEWSLETTER. The letters which have arrived this month, asking to join our group, come from California, Minnesota, Florida, New York, and a good selection of points in between. The elegant letterheads identify the institutions as large state schools, private universities, community colleges, and regional branches. We are indeed a diverse group geographically, and the articles included in this issue reveal the flexibility of our labs to respond to the varying needs of our own institutions.

For those of you who have not yet shared with the rest of us a quick overview of your lab, do send us a few paragraphs description. In addition, we all need to trade other information. I have received several requests (from people engaged in structuring new labs) for suggestions on sources of funding for labs. How is your lab funded? Do you know of outside sources of funding? Another question concerns the use of computer-assisted instruction. Descriptions of programs, the necessary hardware, and evaluations of computer-assisted instruction would be of great interest to many of us.

Please send your contributions to future newsletters, names of new members, and donations of two dollars to help defray mailing and copying costs (with checks made payable to me) to me at the address listed below. I regret that, because of the informal nature of our newsletter, I cannot respond to requests from purchasing offices for invoices in triplicate, shipping memos, and/or whatever other paraphernalia business offices devise to talk to each other.

Muriel Harris, Editor
WRITING LAB NEWSLETTER
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TEACHING COMMUNICATIONS SKILLS
IN SOUTHERN COLORADO'S LAB

The University of Southern Colorado's Basic Communications Department maintains a learning laboratory for reading and for composition. Our open-admissions, multi-cultures institution has remedial programs, but the learning laboratory has "caught on." Student use averages 1,100 hours per month.

The laboratory is staffed by one para-professional and seven trained work-study students. Students may be assigned to the laboratory by faculty, but many students find the laboratory to be a place where they can work independently on particular skills or deficiencies.

The laboratory includes programmed materials, self-study texts, general texts and materials, and handouts. Equipping the laboratory has been a gradual process for the past three years but the current holdings are adequate. Over the years, materials have been cross-referenced so that a student who has difficulty with one type of material can switch to a different approach if necessary. Also, such cross-referencing allows the laboratory to serve several students in one area with a limited equipment or text supply.

As a service to the students, materials about resumes, study skills, letter forms, speech, listening skills, and various technical papers are available.

Ralph G. Dille
University of Southern Colorado

MATERIALS NEEDED FOR
A DISSERTATION ON LABS

At the beginning of the 1977-78 academic year I found myself faced with two large unanswered
questions. The first grew out of my status as a candidate for the Doctor of Arts in English (I specialized in the teaching of writing) at the dissertation stage: "What do I do for a dissertation?" The second came about as a result of my landing one of two Teaching Assistant spots in our new Writing Lab—one that we are pretty much putting together as we go along. That question goes like this: "What do we need to do in this Writing Lab and how do we find out how to do it?"

The natural thing to do was to combine the questions so I'd only have one answer to worry about—so that's what I did. I have begun a dissertation that will answer many of the questions we had about writing labs by going to the logical source, other writing labs. Specifically, I plan to make personal, on-site visits to some 50 writing labs over the next 6-8 months, to see them in action and to interview staff and students. I'll also be collecting all the materials I can on these visits, and I'll take whatever other material I can get—by mail, courier, or thrown through my window wrapped around a brick. When I've finished my legwork, I'll write a book about what I will have learned—and, hopefully, answer some questions about writing labs in a form that will be most useful to the very people I get my information from—those who work in writing labs.

I would very much appreciate information of the following three kinds (or any other kind that you think I ought to have): (1) The names and addresses of labs that such a study ought to include, especially places that have been very successful in some particular way—staffing, funding, physical design, etc. (Invitations to unroll my sleeping bag in a lounge or garage would also be welcome—see #2). (2) Any information on possible funding for even part of the travel in such a project. (3) Published or unpublished materials, or, probably better, information about where I can send for them. I'll keep the WRITING LAB NEWSLETTER informed of my progress.

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THE CLAC NEWSLETTER

CLAC: The Conference on Language Attitudes and Composition is a new pressure group which hopes "to be more on the side of action than suffering." CLAC is the immediate product of discussions held at the Tennessee Invitational Conference on Language Attitudes and Composition, a two-day session held in November 1976 at the Chicago NCTE meeting. If you're (1) worried about the shoddy linguistics used to construct competency-based entry/exit tests for colleges (Georgia's Regents' Exam); or (2) puzzled over the confused hostile reaction to the CCCC "Students' Right to Their Own Language" position paper, a reaction that perceives the NCTE as monolithic or anarchistic; or (3) wrestling with problems associated with language and the teaching of composition; or (4) aware of any public policy and language planning which seems suspect, WRITE FOR THE CLAC NEWSLETTER, c/o Jim Nattinger, Shelly Reece, or Tony Wolk at Portland State University, P.O. Box 751, Portland, OR 97207.

CLAC included a proposal (which was institutionally funded) for a workshop that brought NCTE resources and workshop leaders to the college campus. In part the intent was to alert the English department and others as well to a scholarly tradition which was generally ignored or considered suspect. More importantly, the project had another goal getting college teachers to work with problems and methods of teaching composition, inside or outside the English Department, in ways that go beyond repetition, drill, and practice in correcting errors. CLAC 1, 2, and 3 have described problems in competency testing in various states, as well as reports on the teaching of language done well.

Tony Wolk
Portland State U.

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COURSE OFFERINGS AT VOLUNTEER STATE'S WRITING LAB

Volunteer State Community College at Gallatin, Tennessee, has had a writing lab program for six years. The program at present include three courses: two preparatory for freshman composition and the third a support course.

Instructors in the preparatory courses diagnose writing problems from compositions and assign individual auto-instructional work on the problems. Students then correct their errors on the original compositions, write a new composition, and proofread for the error on which they've been working. Tapes and one-to-one techniques are used as needed. These courses each give three hours of elective credit. The support course works
primarily with writing problems diagnosed in
the regular composition courses but also gives
some auto-instructional and tutorial help on
rhetorical problems. This course gives one
hour of elective credit.

Most of the auto-instructional material has
been written by Volunteer State faculty. The
textbook used for beginning students, Hard-
Core English, by Louise Clara and Betty Nel-
son, is to be published by Holt, Rinehart and
Winston by November, 1978. If you are inter-
ested in an examination copy of the latest
edition, write Betty Nelson at Volunteer
State. (Dr. Clara is now Chairperson of
the Department of Special Studies at South
Georgia College, Douglas, Georgia.)

The lab does attrition studies on students,
a tracking study on those who succeed in the
basic program, a study (for comparison) of
students recommended for the program who do
not take it, and a study of correlations of
success with CCE Sentences Test scores.

Betty Palmer Nelson
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