

Federal dollars enhance LERC

By MIKE HOPKINS
Of the Emerald

Money to fund instructors, classes

A new "college" located on the University campus, the Oregon Labor Education and Research Center, continues to grow, thanks to a \$50,000 grant from the Occupational Safety and Health Administration.

The grant will enable LERC directors to enlarge the center's series of training sessions for working people to include material on occupational safety and health and more instructors.

As a kind of college for blue-collar workers, LERC already offers a variety of seminars, workshops and short courses in towns like Albany, Coos Bay, Roseburg and The Dalles. So far LERC has trained about 1,000 persons in 10 Oregon cities, according to sociology Prof. Steve Deutsch, a former LERC director.

LERC's founders wanted to take the program to where the workers are, rather than vice versa. In fact, state labor leaders like Pat Randall preferred to establish LERC's headquarters at the University rather than in Portland because Eugene's central location makes the center more accessible to Oregonians.

LERC began operation in August, 1977 with \$247,000 from the state Legislature. Organized labor in Oregon, especially the state AFL-CIO, lobbied hard to fund LERC, the first and only program of its kind in the state.

LERC is at the same time similar to and different from other University departments, Deutsch said. Like other departments, the center teaches and disseminates

information. However, LERC's constituency — working men and women — makes it unique.

The first half of LERC's dual commitment to working people, education, has been in full swing for more than a year. Course offerings include basic unionism, contract negotiations for public sector unions, women and unionism and steward training.

Two LERC instructors, Scott Tobey and Jim Gallagher, normally conduct the training sessions. Emory Via serves as the center's director.

Deutsch said the \$50,000 OSHA grant will beef up the center's training program by:

- training LERC instructors in

occupational safety and health issues;

- educating workers on such health-related topics as lead and asbestos;

- training up to 10 working people to become LERC instructors.

All of this is "something we wouldn't otherwise be able to do," Deutsch said.

Deutsch feels the need for worker education on occupational safety and health issues is obvious. Industrial accident statistics for Oregon put the state "way off the chart," he said.

Although the educational phase is prospering, LERC's capacity as a research center remains largely in the planning stages. A small library housed in LERC of-

fices in 154 PLC contains little more than government cost-of-living data and technical material on occupational safety and health.

Deutsch regards LERC's non-lending library as inappropriate for students' needs. LERC is "a small program with a small staff basically not oriented toward students," he said.

But LERC is getting bigger and better. Remodeling to expand office space will begin soon, and new file cabinets and other materials already have arrived.

Eventually LERC directors hope to found a labor studies program, through which working people and full-time students can earn degrees.

Meanwhile, persons desiring academic credit for LERC courses can make arrangements throughout the University's Division of Continuing Education and the Summer Session Office.

Orienteering outing planned

The University ROTC program will offer students orienteering competition on Mount Pisgah southwest of Eugene Saturday.

Competition will begin at 8:30 a.m. Saturday when students try to make their way as quickly as possible through the area using maps provided by the ROTC and their own compasses.

Both beginning and advanced competition will be offered and students are advised to wear sweat clothes for protection against poison oak.

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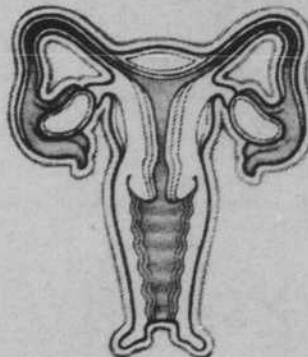
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