This project was a year-long study examining the effectiveness of a small-group writing tutorial program that provides peer-facilitated, structured support for students enrolled in first-year writing classes. This credit-bearing tutorial instructs first-year composition students to apply an evaluative framework to writing.

We hypothesized that students can learn how to assess a piece of writing critically and can effectively respond using a rhetorical framework that encompasses both high- and low-order writing issues.

We conducted two empirical studies:

Results from a one-way repeated measures ANOVA showed statistically significant gains in students’ abilities to respond effectively to a piece of writing after the semester long small-group tutorial. Students improved in giving feedback in all areas except proofreading. In the second study, an independent t-test confirmed that group composition of students from similar or different first-year writing courses did not make a difference in their performance.

Our Program, like many Writing Centers, has relied on anecdote for program validation. This project has developed a model to empirically demonstrate evidence of learning outcomes.