Affordable Learning Georgia Affordable Materials Grants
Research Grants Final Report

## Description

Research Projects will end with a Research Report due at the end of the Final Semester of the project. This will be a manuscript that is well-developed, concise, and suitable for publication. Research reports will be shared in an ALG repository under a [Creative Commons Attribution License 4.0.](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/) Supplementary files, such as data sets, will not be shared in the repository.

While there is no specific page limit, award recipients are strongly encouraged to produce succinct Research Reports; these should be written with a broad public audience in mind, including faculty and professional staff of all disciplines. A template will be provided, but an outline is provided here for planning purposes.

## Note: Online Submission Form

Once you have completed this template, to submit your Final Report, go to the [Final Report submission](https://survey.zohopublic.com/zs/xTCCvG) form.

Follow the instructions on the webpage for uploading your documents. Based on receipt of this report, ALG will process the final payment for your grant. ALG will follow up in the future with post-project grantee surveys and may also request your participation in a publication, presentation, or other event.

# General Information

**Date: 15 April 2025**

**RG Grant Number: ALG M261**

**Institution Name(s): University of West Georgia**

**Project Lead: Crystal Shelnutt**

**Team Members:**

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| **Crystal Shelnutt** | **Senior Lecturer** | **General Education: First Year Writing Program** | **cshelnut@westga.edu** |
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**Course Name(s) and Course Numbers if applicable: English 1101 Composition I**

**Semester Project Began: Fall 2024**

**Final Semester: Spring 2025**

# Narrative

*Give a narrative summary of your project. Include:*

* *Major goals and objectives, research questions addressed*
* *Research design, methods, analytical and data analysis techniques*
* *Findings and implications*

The purpose of this project was to curate a bank of support materials for ENGL 1101 through the creation of a no-cost Ready Reference Toolkit pdf. which was embedded in all First-Year Writing common course shells in our LMS CourseDen. We armed students with the Toolkit, which included general writing instruction, grammatical guides, and a style reference that they

may refer to well beyond their FYW courses.

While we have not yet conducted a study, we anticipate that using this Toolkit will help reduce DFW rates in FYW courses by providing an additional layer of support that

students may use independently and under the guidance of an instructor or peer tutor.

The project also sought to provide parity for FYW faculty in FYW courses and graduate students tutoring in the University Writing Center via a shared lexicon for writing instruction, grammar review, and formatting. Additionally, this Toolkit sets out a support structure for the USG’s new Core IMPACTS curriculum, which we trust will effect improved student learning

outcomes and help students develop skills and competencies necessary for success in

their careers.

Although our findings are anecdotal, they are compelling and suggest that a more formal assessment will support those findings.

# 2. Resulting Practice Recommendations

*In a bullet-point list, briefly list any recommendations the team has for future practices in teaching and learning with open and/or affordable materials as related to this research.*

* More and more, students struggle to purchase assigned texts, even in our discipline, where most texts are quite reasonably priced. A commitment to utilizing low- or no-cost textbooks and OERs automatically removes a potential barrier to success for many students.
* Teaching first-year writing necessitates that faculty be nimble, teaching a single concept from a variety of different perspectives. (For example, one may teach paragraph development using varying terminologies, as demonstrated in our ToolKit.) Having a resource that includes varying methods of teaching a given concept – and making that resource available not just to all students, but all faculty who teach FYW, as well as Writing Center tutors – serves to further support students as they return to those foundational writing concepts again and again through their undergraduate career.
* We intend to revise the ToolKit to include materials centered on reading and writing about literature.

# 3. Future Plans

The First-Year Writing Toolkit was completed ahead of the fall 2024 semester. The development process involved a revision of some existing Open Educational Resources (OERs) and the creation of new content, achieved through close collaboration among the project team and a first-year student artist, who contributed multiple original drawings and artwork to illustrate key concepts.

Following its completion, the FYW Toolkit was adopted by all first-year writing instructors and integrated into the institution’s learning management system. Students began engaging with the writing toolkit in fall 2024, and initial anecdotal findings have demonstrated notable student engagement and learning.

Building on this foundation, the project proceeded with the pursuit and successful acquisition of Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval, ensuring that all research activities associated with this project will adhere to ethical standards. Subsequently, a comprehensive set of questions and research instruments was meticulously designed to effectively measure the intended outcomes. The deployment of these instruments is scheduled for the fall 2025 and spring 2026 semesters, utilizing Qualtrics through the learning management system as the primary platform.

All non-minor students enrolled in first-year composition courses will be invited to participate in the study. The primary objective at this stage is to collect baseline data regarding students’ perception of their writing competencies and critical thinking strategies as a result of engaging with the FYW Toolkit. Upon gathering the data, a thorough analysis will be conducted to asses whether the implementation of the toolkit has contributed to the development of these essential skills among participants.

Based on the findings of this analysis, the project team intends to seek additional grant funding to further enhance and refine the writing toolkit. Finally, the results and insights gained from this research will be disseminated through presentations at academic conferences, contributing to the broader discourse on writing pedagogy and student development.

# 4. Supplementary Files

*Give a description of any supplementary files provided to ALG, such as data sets or figures. Indicate whether these files can be shared with the public.*

* University of West Georgia’s First-Year Writing Toolkit (attached)