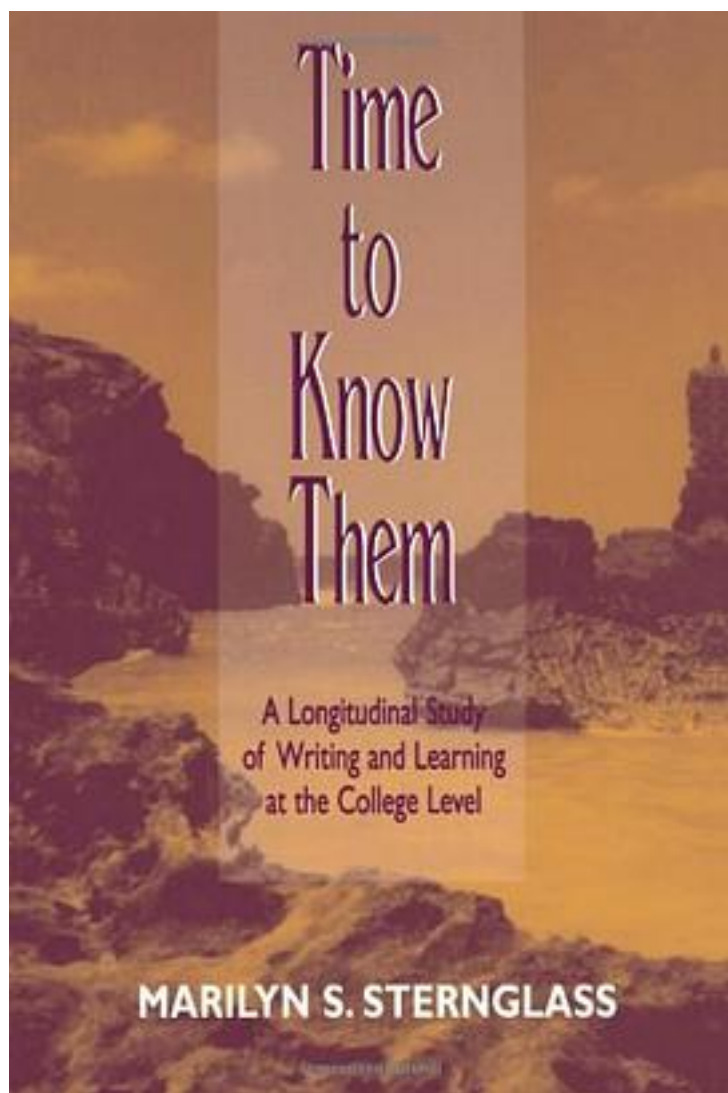


Time to Know Them



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In a time of declining resources in institutions of higher education, we grapple with how priorities are to be set for the limited resources available. Most vulnerable are those students labeled underprepared by colleges and universities. Should we argue that the limited resources available ought to be used to support these students through their undergraduate years? And, if we decide that we want to do that, what evidence of their potential for success can we provide that will justify the use of these resources? Through longitudinal research that follows students who have been so labeled over all their college years, we can begin to find answers to these questions.

"Time to Know Them" is the first book that follows the experiences of a group of students over their entire academic experience. No previous studies have brought together the factors incorporated in this study:

- *examining writing and learning on a true longitudinal basis;
- *studying a multicultural urban population;
- *investigating the relationship between writing and learning by examining papers written over time for regularly assigned academic courses across a range of disciplines; and
- *taking into consideration non-academic factors that influence academic performance such as race, gender, socio-economic status, and ideological orientation.

Through interviews twice a semester over six years, the collection of papers written for all courses, observations of instructional settings, and analysis of required institutional tests of writing, the author has been able to pull together a more complete picture of writing and intellectual development over the college years than has previously been available in any study. Students are seen to acquire the ability to handle more complex reasoning tasks as they find themselves in more challenging intellectual settings and where risk-taking and exploration of new ideas are valued. The integration of students' previous life experiences into their academic studies allows them to analyze, critique, modify, and apply their previously held world views to their new learning. These changes are seen to occur over time with instructional settings and support providing key roles in writing development. Personal factors in students' lives present difficulties that require persistence and dedication to overcome. Never before have the complexities of real individual lives as they affect academic performance been so clearly presented.

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