Developmental Changes in College Writers

Many high school writers enter college without experience with college-level thinking and writing. The following has not yet developed in most high school writers:

1. Many do not understand academic discourse (vocabulary, tone, sentence structure), especially forms of argument.

2. Some have not developed formal reasoning capabilities for hypothetical situations.

3. Many have not developed metacognitive habits and are not aware of their own thinking, reading, or writing processes.

4. Many have false systems of beliefs about how to approach writing tasks; students don't approach writing tasks as rhetorical problem solving (who is the audience, what is the purpose, what is the mode or expected form).

5. They lack a sense of authority and therefore struggle with expressing themselves forcefully. End up using "foreign" language and sentence-structure, which comes across as awkward at worst and stilted at best.

6. "It makes sense to me." They are dependent on writer-based prose vs. reader-based prose.

7. They lack reading experience with academic discourse, particularly argument. Therefore, they have not internalized language or discourse patterns to apply to their own writing.

8. They can easily experience cognitive overload and anxiety because writing tasks require too many new skills to be applied at once.