

April 10, 2007

**Dear Colleagues:**



I am pleased that you are considering adopting *Essentials of Oceanography* for your course. It is specifically designed to aid your teaching of oceanography and enhance your students' understanding of the ocean.

You may be interested to know how I got involved in co-authoring the textbook with Hal Thurman. I first met Hal during a geoscience educator's field trip to Baja California in 1991. We talked in great detail about the book and I was thrilled to have a textbook author listen to my ideas about improving his textbook. When Hal retired from teaching in 1995, he remembered me, liked my ideas, and so invited me to co-author *Essentials* with him. I wasn't sure what I was getting myself into, but I accepted! Looking back on the past 12 years and four editions, it's been a thrilling ride crafting the text into a useful resource for teaching oceanography and seeing its success grow.

As I work on the textbook, one guiding idea I have always maintained is to write the book in a similar way to how I teach the subject matter in my classes. This includes using good analogies and even appropriate humor to get a point across.

If you're curious about the reading level, a reading comprehension analysis has been performed on the text. The reading lab at Palomar College takes random passages of the book and does a statistical analysis on the content such as the number of words per sentence and the number of syllables per word. They also look at sentence structure and the use of vocabulary terms. They enter these data into a computer program that derives the reading level. I'm pleased to report that the reading level is exactly appropriate for what first-year college students ought to be able to comprehend. It's rewarding to know that the textbook is geared toward the appropriate audience!

However, as instructors, we all know the challenge of getting our students to read the textbook. In my classes, I've asked students how they use the textbook and many students—rather honestly—indicate that they just skim the book. I would love for all my students to read each chapter, but I know they have busy lives. That's why I've designed the book around the figures to let the figures tell the story of the chapter. That way, students can benefit from viewing just the figures, which tell a coherent picture of the main concepts within each chapter. In this edition, you'll notice many improvements in the illustration package. In addition, the geoscience animations show various figures in motion to help students grasp important concepts and processes.

I hope that you'll find the text appropriate for your course and take advantage of the many ancillaries that are designed to help you teach effectively. When you adopt my textbook, in a sense, you're adopting me as well. I enjoy communicating with other instructors about teaching oceanography, so please feel free to contact me.

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Sincerely,

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