Dear Colleagues:

I am pleased that you are considering adopting Essentials of Oceanography for your course. It is specifically designed to be an up-to-date, pedagogically complete teaching aid that aims to enhance your students’ understanding of the ocean. In fact, the 10th Edition of Essentials received a prestigious 2012 “Texty” textbook excellence award.

You might 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 and liked my ideas, so he invited me to co-author Essentials with him. I wasn’t sure what I was getting myself into, but I accepted. Looking back over the past 25 years and seven editions, it’s been a thrilling ride trying to craft the text into a useful resource for teaching oceanography. Sadly, Hal passed away in late 2012; this edition is dedicated to him. I’ll miss his writing expertise, knowledge about the ocean, and easy-going demeanor.

As I work on the textbook, one underlying principle I try to keep in mind is to write the book in a similar way to how I teach the subject matter in my classes (the technique is called “teach writing”). This includes employing useful analogies, cutting-edge scientific discoveries, interesting stories, 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. Various aspects of the text are analyzed, including overall organization, sentence structure, and use of terminology. I’m pleased to report that the reading level is exactly appropriate for what first-year college students ought to be able to comprehend.

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 addition, the 12th edition features short narrated instructional videos called SmartFigures/SmartTables.

Another thing you may notice in the 12th edition are the many improvements in the illustration package. And, the overall structure of the book presents material in easily-digestible chunks, along with Concept Checks at the end of each section. In addition, students will benefit from the array of Web resources such as geoscience animations, recaps in every section, testing modules in MasteringOceanography, and Web videos with embedded QR codes. These items are designed 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.

Sincerely,

Alan P. Trujillo

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