To the Teacher

The purpose of each *Challenges* textbook is to help students become better readers through explicit teaching of reading skills and strategies that will break counter-productive habits, such as word-for-word translation. *Challenges 3* has six units with two chapters in each. Each unit begins with an introduction to the topic—a one-page activity to activate students' interest and background knowledge.

Each chapter consists of six sections, each one designed to support students' understanding of a reading passage. **Getting Ready to Read** previews the specific reading topic the same way that the introduction previews the unit. **Vocabulary Preview** familiarizes students with the meaning of the eight to ten vocabulary items highlighted in the chapter.

Skills

Understanding Genre is a new section for *Challenges 3* that exposes students to various academic and literary genres and explains how they are reflected in the readings. Each chapter introduces one genre, ranging from academic essays to human interest stories to biographies. Practice exercises relating the genre of the reading are also included.

Study Tip boxes contain helpful information about academic research (e.g., search engines and research databases and avoiding plagiarism) and studying in universities in the U.S. (e.g., communicating with faculty and making a study schedule).

Academic Skills is another section unique to *Challenges 3*. This appears at the end of every unit and provides students with an opportunity to understand and practice academic skills that will be helpful in college and university courses.

Post-Reading Activities

The **Reading Comprehension** exercise includes about ten questions on the content of the reading. These are objective questions (true/false and multiple choice) and open-ended questions to which students have to write a short answer. In later chapters, the answers require more thoughtful responses as higher-level reading skills are addressed. In **Discuss Your Ideas**, small groups of students talk about their thoughts and ideas about the events and/or dilemmas that are presented in the reading.

Vocabulary

A primary goal of *Challenges* is for students to increase their vocabulary by improving their word-learning skills and expanding each set of target words into related word forms. We agree with Keith S. Folse (see *Vocabulary Myths,* 2004, University of Michigan Press) that vocabulary acquisition and retention are critically important to second language learners and require a structured approach. Some textbooks emphasize using context clues to determine the meaning of unknown words. While we agree that paying attention to context is a valuable reading skill, our vocabulary exercises bypass this approach and directly support students' ability to recognize and comprehend the words encountered in each unit. Students will learn eight to ten words in each chapter by focusing on their meaning and use in the reading passage and by retrieving the words in review exercises. An important aspect of vocabulary development is knowing all the ways a word is used. Some students may know one meaning of the target vocabulary but not all. And, as Folse (2006) says, it can take as many as seven retrievals to learn a word. Students are also asked to use new vocabulary in short writing assignments based on the readings. Each chapter also has a word form chart that includes the *most commonly used* forms of the targeted words. Each chapter also includes a **Vocabulary Notes** section that provides useful phrases and collocations that are based on selected words. The goal of these sections is to support students' independent word-learning skills as they progress beyond the scope of this book.

To determine which words to target, written passages were filtered through the Vocabulary Profiler developed by Laufer & Nation (1995) and adapted for the web by Tom Cobb at the University of Quebec at Montreal (www.lextutor.ca/vp/). A third of the target words are from the Academic Word List (Coxhead 2000). The rest of the words were carefully chosen for their useful parts of speech, phrases, and usage. We think that these results make a valuable list to which students can add other words that they want to learn.

Timed/Paced Reading

Studies show that it's hard to comprehend a reading passage if you read it too slowly. As Bell (2001) reports, a slow reader cannot keep in mind what he or she has read long enough to remember how it relates to what is being read at the moment. Therefore, it's important that second language learners try to read at a pace of at least 200 words per minute. This is especially important for academic students, but even casual reading requires a certain speed to comprehend, follow, and enjoy the reading. It's

hard, though, for second language students to read without looking up all the words that they don't understand in a passage. The timed/paced readings at the end of each unit are designed to show students that they can understand a lot more than they think when they read at a faster pace. The readings could also be used as extra material for each unit.

Extra Materials

There are three **Appendixes** at the back of the book. **Appendix 1** contains the true/false questions for each unit's timed/paced reading passage. **Appendix 2**, Increasing Reading Speed, explains to students the purpose of timed and paced reading and contains the procedure and a progress chart for each type. **Appendix 3** is a list of the 106 targeted words in the textbook.

The goal in this series is to **challenge** students to become more skillful, inde-pendent readers and to provide a strong foundation that will serve them well as they pursue their academic goals. We welcome any comments or questions at esladmin@umich.edu.