“Knowing Our Students”
As we began the WAC Alliance, we first asked: “What are the characteristics of the discourse communities—personal, civic, and academic—that our students bring to the university? How diverse are these practices, and how does that diversity affect curriculum and teaching?”

January 31, 2005: A group of UNM faculty, administrators, and Teaching Assistants met to discuss methods to foster greater understanding of the needs of freshmen English students at the University. Students were asked to describe in detail the different groups where they feel most comfortable expressing their ideas. Student ethnographers captured the conversations of the groups. In addition, each group prepared a report. An overarching theme of the group reports was that students are comfortable in discourse communities in which they feel safe, accepted, respected, and not judged.

February 28, 2005: A group of UNM faculty from across the University met to share what they know about their student and community literacies. Professor Ann Nihlen and student ethnographers captured the conversations and each group created a report of their most important points. For many groups, the conversation focused on ways to enable students to have more ownership of their writing. Another key point was ensuring students understand the professor’s expectations, which is often achieved through the use of writing prompts and rubrics. Although many faculty agreed that grammar matters, they felt that it should not necessarily be the main focus of writing in the classroom. Several groups expressed concern about students’ ability to shift from basic writing skills to professional skills needed within a discipline. The need for writing within and across disciplines was seen as vital to student success: students learn abstract concepts more thoroughly when they have to explain the ideas in writing.

April 25, 2005: Colloquium: "Creating Pathways to Academic Literacy and Beyond: Situating the Personal, Professional, and Political." Keynote Speaker Dr. Juan Guerra. Dr. Guerra addressed the values of academic literacy and how these relate to access and success in higher education as well as professional and community settings. His key note address centered on effective approaches to teaching writing that help students move between their different communities of belonging with authority. Dr. Guerra examined how an understanding of cultural diversity enhances students' ability to write: appropriately (with an awareness of discourse conventions), productively (achieve desired aims), ethically (attune to the cultural ecology around them), critically (engage inquiry and discovery), and responsively (responsibly negotiate the tensions of exercising authority).

“Inviting Our Students to Academic Literacies”
Next we examined how disciplinary discourses at the university build on what students learn in writing courses and how can we bridge academic and community discourses, to help our students enter the disciplinary communities they seek to join in order to help students with their writing.

November 7-11, 2005: WAC’s Write On! Workshop
During the Write On! Workshop (WOW!), we worked with over 200 undergraduate students who came to receive writing guidance on a project they were working on at the time. We had a team of 15-20 writing tutors on hand to work with each student individually for as long as necessary. We also asked these students to participate in roundtable discussions or focus groups in order to assess their particular needs in a writing classroom. Approximately 65 students participated in the focus groups, nearly 35% of the undergraduates who attended WOW.

October 24-25, 2006: WAC Week: Writing Matters and WOW Workshops
During this two-day workshop, Cheo Torres. Panel Speakers: Jim Belshaw, Reed Dasenbrock, Karen Olson, Chuck Paine, Jane Selverstone, & Amy Wohlert lead participants in a discussion of ways to make
writing matter. We also offered the Write On! Workshop (WOW!), working with undergraduate students who came to receive writing guidance from writing tutors on a project they were working on at the time.

**October 22-23, 26, 2007: WAC Week: Writing Matters and WOW Workshops**
During the first two days, Jerry Shea, Lindsey Ives, Leah Sneider, Janet Yagoda Shagam, Penny Pence, Katie Denton, Chuck Paine, Jim Burbank, and Tom Pierce provided presentations on how to help faculty use writing in their classroom and how to help students improve their writing and. On the final day, in collaboration with Peer Mentoring Graduate Students of Color (PMGC) and Black Graduate and Professional Student Association (BGPSA), WAC provided a walk-in workshop for students writing letters and personal statements for graduate school applications.