Opening Remarks: 2011 Earth Day Conference
“Constructing Space(s): Making Our Homes in the Twenty-First Century”
By Erin Penner Gallegos

Good morning and thank you for being here today. I am Erin Gallegos, the Events Coordinator for WAC—Writing Across Communities, and the Program Chair for the Earth Day Conference. I won’t speak long today, as we have a full panel to kick off this second annual Earth Day Conference, but I do want to say a few words about the exigence behind this event, and thank a few important figures in the process.

First, I’d like to thank this year’s presenters, who responded to the call, not just for papers, but also to enter their work and themselves into an increasingly important interdisciplinary conversation. The theme for this year’s conference, “Constructing Space(s): Making Our Homes in the Twenty-First Century,” really encapsulates the kind of intellectual and community-building work that Writing Across Communities seeks to accomplish. In the call for papers that today’s panelists responded to, we noted that since “living responsibly in the 21st century will take the collaboration of many thinkers and actors, it is imperative to have cross-disciplinary, cross-paradigm conversations,” and that “by fostering this conversation, Writing Across Communities hopes to complicate the ways we understand ourselves and our planet.”

In short, through the hosting of this conference, we are both rhetorically and physically constructing an intellectual space for this crucial conversation—and you, our audience members and supporters, are crucial elements in both the construction and the sustenance of this intellectual space. So thanks to you, as well, for joining in this collaborative effort, to begin thinking, speaking, and acting more conscientiously toward our collective home—this planet Earth.

Finally, I’d like to thank the many others whose actions have helped to build this event: the tireless members of the Earth Day Conference Steering Committee, our sponsors from across the university (check out your programs), the enthusiastic instructors who have brought these themes into their classrooms and encouraged their students to attend today, the staff of the Student Union Building in whose physical space we are convened, and the many other enthusiastic and incredible supporters at UNM and throughout the greater UNM Community.

Without further ado, I’ll turn this over to Professor Gary Harrison, who will moderate our first panel. Thank you.
Good morning and thank you for being here today. I am Erin Gallegos, the Events Coordinator for WAC—Writing Across Communities, and the Program Chair for the Earth Day Conference. I am up here today to introduce our esteemed keynote speaker.

He is the author or co-author of 11 books and 85 refereed journal articles. A native of South Carolina, he has lived and worked in New Mexico, Tennessee, and Texas, where he has been at Texas A&M since 1990. Now Professor and Department Head of English at Texas A&M, Dr. M. Jimmie Killingsworth is a renowned Whitman scholar, a critic and practitioner of environmental writing, and a pioneer in the field of environmental rhetoric. In this field, he is perhaps best known for his book, *Ecospeak: Rhetoric and Environmental Politics in America*, co-authored with his wife, Jacqueline Palmer. He has received countless honors across many disciplines for his scholarship, including the 2011 Alfred N. Goldsmith Award for Distinguished Contributions to Engineering Communication, from the IEEE Professional Communication Society.

And although he is very clearly a true academic, and a serious scholar, I can attest that he is also possesses an incredible sense of humor and is a wonderfully thoughtful, and funny, storyteller. And with that, I'll invite him up here to give a talk with a title no one else could have come up with: “Virtual Islands and Catfish on Airplanes: Thoughts on the Meaning of Place.”