

When the last student left Melinda Wilkerson's office at 5:30 p.m., the young English Professor just sat, too exhausted to move. But recently, as she picked up another journal from the bottomless pile or greeted another student with a smile, she often wondered whether it was all worth it. Wilkerson had had such a moment about an hour earlier, when Ron Agua, whose office was across the hall, had waved to her as he walked past her door. She liked reading the journals, getting a glimpse of how her students were reacting to the novels and poems she had them read, watching them grow and change. Her desk was piled high with student papers, journals, and recommendation forms. "Professor Wilkerson," it read, "I just wanted to thank you for taking the time to talk to me last week. I really needed to talk to someone experienced about it, and all my other professors are men, and I just couldn't have talked to them. You helped me a whole lot." Sighing, Wilkerson folded the note, put it in her bag, and closed her office door. "There goes my weekend," she thought to herself, knowing that just reading and commenting on the thirty journals would take up all of Saturday. Suddenly the pile of journals and the \$1,000 didn't seem so important. "I'm off to the Rat," he announced. "I cut down my office hours this semester," he told her one day. She thought that dealing with students was "getting work done."