

IS OUTSOURCING GOING TOO FAR?

A letter like this one may be hitting your in-box soon.

By Lee Burdette Williams

DEAR COLLEAGUE:

I have no doubt that this letter finds you in the midst of your biggest ongoing struggle: how to do more with less. Tight budgets, declining resources, unfilled positions, lost battles at the cabinet level—sound familiar? Of course it does. You spend an inordinate amount of your time searching for fiscal solutions, and not nearly enough focused on the imperative of our profession: *student learning*.

I would like to tell you about an opportunity that might make your life a little easier, and your division a lot more effective: West End Campus Activities Resource Enterprises, Inc. (WE-CARE). Be honest. As a visionary, you have probably thought about it: outsourcing your campus activities program. Why not? You and your colleagues have already started the trend by outsourcing food services, counseling and health services, and residence hall management. By contracting with WE-CARE, a full-service campus activities organization, you can get the most for your money, avoid the typical headaches caused by campus activities (liability, staff inexperience and turnover, and negative publicity), and resume a focus on student learning that will enhance the quality of life on your campus while improving *retention* as well.

Here are some of the questions I am asked most often when I talk about WE-CARE. Perhaps they are questions you have as well.

What kinds of services does WE-CARE offer?

WE-CARE offers just about everything you can imagine: student organization advising, leadership development, student government, Greek life management, multicultural student development, and major social and

entertainment programming. There is nothing your campus activities office does now that we are not prepared to do. But we offer more, including:

Attractive insurance rates for high-risk activities (for example, sumo wrestling and bungee jumping).

Experienced staff members thoroughly trained in WE-CARE quality standards (we are currently seeking ISO 9002 certification) as well as student development theory.

Flexibility: If you want to add something to your campus activities program, you can use our on-line order form and we will make the necessary contractual adjustments. Just as easily, you can eliminate entire programs, such as Greek life, with a single keystroke. Consider this: no prolonged or unsuccessful searches for new staff, and no uncomfortable or potentially costly terminations.

But my campus is different from others. How does WE-CARE individualize its services to meet the needs of specific campuses?

It's easier than you would think. In our program catalog you will be asked to specify your campus culture from among dozens of options. For example, Package SB-3a (Southern Baptist but with a social conscience and a significant football program) might be your choice. Or you might choose our equally popular Package NE-14cw/hf (New England church-affiliated but independent, prefer students to create their own fun, with hostile faculty). Perhaps 2TRUw/T10A-TMG-oil (Second-tier research

university with top-ten aspirations, too many Greeks, and overinvolved state legislature) sounds like your university. Whatever campus culture you enjoy, whatever special characteristics make your college stand out, WE-CARE will work with you to create a congruent campus activities program.

How does student development theory fit in?

Please spend a few minutes looking at the section of our catalog titled "Student Development: It's Not Dead Yet." You'll see that we offer a variety of package options. For example, our moderately priced CV1-4 plan (Chickering Vectors 1 through 4) might be all you need for your students. Or you might choose to add vectors 5 through 7 at a small additional cost. We can also modify our programs to encourage cognitive development (please see "Beyond the Teachable Moment: What We Do When They Say 'Huh?'" in our catalog). Our staff keeps up to date on the latest developmental theories. Reflective judgment? We can encourage it. Minority racial identity development? We have it covered. WE-CARE staff read *every single issue* of the *Journal of College Student Development* and attend monthly in-services to keep abreast of current issues and trends in higher education. Honestly, can you say that about your current staff?

Are there hidden costs?

No. Nothing is hidden. There are additional costs, depending on the level of service you require, but these are clearly stated in your contract. For example, if you would like a WE-CARE staff member to sit on an enrollment management committee, or any committee chaired by a faculty member, an extra fee is assessed. Advising local fraternities costs more than national fraternities, and all fraternity advising has a higher fee than sorority advising, except in Indiana. If you have had a student government officer indicted for embezzlement in the past five years, we must add an administrative fee to your package. A complete list of

these add-ons can be found in our catalog. But at WE-CARE, our belief is this: you already deal with too many unpleasant surprises in your job. We don't want to be another one.

Let me just mention a few highlights from our catalog:

Student publications: Are you tired of being misquoted in the student newspaper? Tired of unflattering and uninformed opinion pieces? Tired of the most controversial campus issues appearing on the front page just prior to an admissions visitation day or a trustees' meeting? WE-CARE's publications division can help. We can advise the newspaper *with your best interests in mind*. And what about a yearbook? Declining interest in this

important archive has caused the demise of many college annuals. WE-CARE's patented yearbook template allows us to produce your yearbook for minimal cost and effort. We simply send our own photographer to the events we plan (other events can be covered at an additional cost), then publish these photos in an attractive hardcover book (the cover, of course, will be unique to your institution). We

will even survey the student body using state-of-the-art research techniques to determine the most marketable person on campus for a special dedication.

Campus colors: Are you frustrated with your school's unattractive color scheme? WE-CARE can "do your colors." It's very possible that you might be a "winter" college but your founders naively assigned you "spring" colors. Recent research has shown that this could be a cause of declining enrollment. WE-CARE can work with you on selecting a new color pattern, and for those of you struggling with another sometimes-awkward part of tradition, a new mascot: no more ugly brown and orange, no more embarrassing war-painted, dancing Chief Somebody. Image, as we know, is everything, and no slick admissions

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OUR HIGHLY SKILLED PROFESSIONALS
KNOW HOW TO GIVE STUDENTS
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WITHOUT REALLY GIVING THEM
ACTUAL RESPONSIBILITY.
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brochure can gloss over a purple and yellow color scheme or a slow, clumsy turtle.

Save thousands of dollars on major events: You've seen the numbers—\$25,000 for Indigo Girls, \$40,000 for some talent-challenged band you've never heard of but your students insist they have to have. WE-CARE has mastered the art of "block-booking." We will bring in popular performers at rock-bottom prices, contract with the local semireliable lighting and sound companies (and monitor the behavior of their employees while on campus), and provide security for the event. Most important, though, students will always believe they are running the show.

And what about the students?

That may be the question you find yourself asking. We at WE-CARE are all student affairs professionals. Students are the reason we exist. Everything we do at WE-CARE is designed to provide students with the best possible college experience. Some may fault us for doing too much, but consider this: How many times have things gone wrong because students were given too much responsibility and not enough staff oversight? That will never be a problem with WE-CARE. Although students will always be a part of our process, we assume ultimate responsibility for all our programs, and we make sure *nothing falls through the cracks*. Is it learning? Of course. Students learn by working side by side with our highly skilled professionals, who know how to give students the *experience* of responsibility without really giving them

actual responsibility. Think of it as a kind of collegiate Disney World. Like the skilled Disney engineers who have designed Space Mountain and the Haunted House, WE-CARE staff know how to create risk-free environments that give the illusion of involvement. The same sort of fun and excitement that keeps Disney visitors coming back for more translates into *increased alumni giving*—and who wouldn't like to see that?

I hope I have piqued your curiosity just a little. I encourage you to peruse our catalog and to visit our Web site (www.challengeandsupport.com). There you will find testimonials from chief student affairs officers like yourself who have decided to take advantage of this efficient, cost-effective, and, most of all, educational approach to campus activities. Please, compare our prices with your current campus activities budget and see whether WE-CARE can make a difference to your bottom line.

Sincerely,

Lee Williams
Chief Executive Officer
WE-CARE, Inc.

P.S. Special introductory rates are in effect until the end of 1998. More student learning for your money! Act now and WE-CARE will add Homecoming to your contract for *no charge!* (Special fees may apply for guaranteeing a diverse homecoming court.)



WHAT'S NEW ON YOUR ELECTRONIC CAMPUS?

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