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**Finding a life partner on campus**

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Observers, educators say university is best place and time to form lifelong friendships

What are the chances of meeting your future spouse in university?

Quite high, it seems, but only if more young people would look up from their lecture notes and be open to others, said observers.

University life is one of the best times to form friendships that can turn into deeper bonds, they added.

And over the years, universities have played host to many budding relationships, some that have progressed to marriage.

Professor Leo Tan from the National University of Singapore's (NUS) department of biological science became a licensed solemniser in 2014 and has since helped about 130 couples tie the knot.

About a quarter of the weddings involved graduates from NUS or former students from the National Institute of Education (NIE).

"I can't pick and choose couples, but it's a bonus to marry people you know personally," he said.

Likewise, Mr Soon Min Yam, director of Nanyang Technological University's Alumni Affairs Office, has solemnised 240 marriages in the past five years, 149 involving NTU alumni, students, faculty and staff.

Hongbao that NTU couples give him as a token of appreciation are donated to the university's bursaries in their name to benefit needy students, he added.

Singapore Management University (SMU) has received three requests from alumni in recent years to use its campus for wedding-related events, one of which was a solemnisation ceremony.

Universities said they do not organise programmes to promote dating or finding life partners, but activities planned by student clubs and alumni associations are avenues for students to mix and make friends.

An NUS spokesman noted that its office of alumni relations worked with the Social Development Network to organise a Singles Night for the first time in December last year, and there are plans to hold the event again this year.

The dinner date event, which drew 110 NUS graduates, included a speed-dating segment and a sharing session by the university's Campus Couples Alumni Group - married couples who had found love on campus and have helped raise funds for needy undergraduates.

Dating agency GaiGai, which has worked with NUS, NTU and SMU, said more student clubs and associations have reached out to it, and they receive two to three enquiries a month.

These clubs usually seek sponsorship for school events, dinner and dances, orientation or hall events and networking sessions.

The agency also conduct talks and workshops to share dating or personal branding tips.

Prof Tan said: "University is the best place to strike up friendship and partnerships. You have more time to think about your personal life, there's no housing loan or income tax to pay.

"Work life is hectic. Depending on your profession, there's limited exposure to suitable individuals."

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