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Well-rounded individuals

By Sabariah Salleh

CO-CURRICULAR activities help shape students into well-rounded individuals. Aside from academic achievements, an astounding track record in co-curricular activities bestows cream-of-the-crop status on students.

Not only will an extensive list of achievements help students be more marketable, it will also shape them into better persons, enhance their decision-making and organisational skills, and instil empathy in them.

Every university has its own way of inculcating these values in students. For instance, KUSTEM's students can acquire fresh or sea-water skills through water-based activities.

New students at KUSTEM must go through a mandatory ocean-orientation programme to familiarise themselves with the coastal environment and sea.

Oceanographic and marine studies are the university's niche areas. Therefore, according to deputy rector (Student Affairs) Professor Dr Abdul Majid Mohd Isa, the university wanted to ensure that its students had more than a passing acquaintance with the South China Sea.

UPSI, whose niche is in teaching, has a top orchestra ensemble and owns a modest plantation.

Producing vegetables such as broccoli, kangkung and sawi, the 2ha plot showcases UPSI students' and staff's hard work.

You can sometimes spot Vice-Chancellor Datuk Dr Muhammad Rais Abdul Karim toiling at the plot.

The plot is managed by UPSI's Gardening Club, established a few months ago.

Rais, the club's advisor, is keen on developing students with multiskills and the club helps to do just that.

Not only are they taught how to plant vegetables and care for them, they are also required to manage the harvests.

KUKUM encourages students to be involved in charitable organisations.

It recently raised RM10,017 to help the Kuala Perlis fire victims. In addition, it collected more than 200 boxes of clothing from neighbouring villages during an eight-day campaign.

Students also take part in programmes organised by the university as well as those at the national level.

KUKTEM places great emphasis on a well-balanced student development programme.

Apart from equipping students with technical knowledge and skills, the soft skills aspect has always been one of the university's concerns.

Soft skills emphasised include leadership, teamwork, effective communication and self-esteem.

Student activities can be divided into several categories: uniformed squads such as Palapes, clubs and associations such as the Debate Club, sports and recreation and community services.

Activities organised by public universities also promote racial harmony. For instance, KUTKM established a Unity Club to integrate the multi-ethnic, multireligious and multicultural student population. The club was formed in 2002 as a result of the vision and idea mooted by former Prime Minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad

In line with the idea of racial harmony, KUIM assistant registrar Muhammad Haizuan Rozali said its programmes sought to promote crosscultural communication between students and the community.

Most of the students are Malay and they hardly have the chance to mix

with other races. Realising this, the institute made an effort to plan crosscultural activities with multiracial universities and colleges such as Universiti Tunku Abdul Rahman and Nilai International College.

Activities planned include social work, he said, adding that KUIM would also like to organise international programmes.

Although most of the activities were planned by students, the Student Affairs Department plays a big role in providing guidance and advice.

The department tries to include religious values, motivation, patriotism and counselling in modules and activities.

It offers relevant services and organises programmes to shape students into well-rounded individuals.

Students at other public universities and university colleges including UNIMAS, UMS, UTM, UM, UUM, UiTM, KUiTTHO, UKM, UPM and IIUM are also involved in a wide range of activities.

Some, like the two UiTM students who conquered Mount Everest recently, have managed to make a name for themselves in the international arena.

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