

UMS: Student counselling service is effective

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KOTA KINABALU: *The Pembimbing Rakan Siswa* (PRS) counselling that was started in 2003 has been quite effective in resolving student problems on campus, said Prof. Madya Datuk Dr Kasim Mad Mansur, UMS Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Student and Alumni Affairs).

The PRS or peer counsellor/friend is important to students in higher learning institutes because it not only enables them to have someone to talk to but also settle youth problems.

"With about 17,000 students in UMS, there are 1,001 problems that they face such as lack of money, couple break-ups and low CGPA (Cumulative Grade Point Average), among others," he said.

Hence, he said the convention assists these students cope and get through their respective problems. There are four counsellors on hand in the UMS campus. As a person in charge of student affairs, Dr Kasim sometimes asks students with problems why they are ashamed to meet him, even in private. "They told me they were ashamed but feel comfortable when talking to their peer counsellors," he said, adding that there are about 100 full-time PRS counsellors in the campus.

Dr Kasim said these PRS counsellors would also visit the villages and give motivation to UPSR candidates who didn't do well in their exams.

On other developments, he said there were no baby dumping cases in the UMS contrary to previous reports.

However, there were odd cases of students who became pregnant while pursuing their studies. The UMS, he said, provided assistance to these unwed undergraduates to complete their studies as well as until they deliver their babies.

To some extent, he said the UMS also helped them get married to their boyfriends.

State Tourism, Culture and Environment Minister Datuk Masidi Manjun, who officiated at the PRS convention, said it is important for students of institutes of higher learning (IPTs) to have friends or to socialise among their peers.

He said many IPT students nowadays have become introverted because of the level of technology available to them.

The tendency to be alone is not good because if they don't make friends or socialise, they eventually will develop a one-track mind, he said.

"They will not listen to ideas from their friends but always think that they are always right," he said. He said should the introverted graduate have a vision to become a leader in the future, the person must be prepared to learn from others and to learn to respect their views even though he does not concur with their views.

Having a leader who does not appreciate ideas and views from others is the worst thing that can happen, he said.

Students from private IPTs (Sabah), public IPTs (throughout Malaysia) and also secondary schools in West Coast areas attended the joint UMS and Ministry of Higher Learning convention.