Healthier Bodies, Brighter Minds

In their ongoing "war for talents", to attract and retain the best faculty and staff, Singapore Management University's (SMU) mission to become a world-class institution includes its concerted effort to encourage and support its pool of well-trained staff toward good health and wellness.

President Ron Frank reveals that the university has always been striving to be a 'best place to work' and an employer of choice—which explains why their Workplace Health Promotion (WHP) programme forms an integral part of their aggressive talent retention policies.

SMU's comprehensive health programme is tailored to the needs and interests of staff in order to obtain maximum participation and impact. The activities span the four key areas of WHP:

- Physical activities
- Healthy eating
- Mental Health & Wellness
- Smoke Free Campus

At any one time in a week, there are at least two exercise classes running concurrently to provide greater choice to participants. These generally focus on cardiovascular fitness, stretching and toning. To further encourage participation and imbue a sense of personal responsibility, classes are fully subsidized if individuals manage at least a 75% attendance record.

In the area of healthy eating, SMU aims to provide a supportive environment by equipping staff with knowledge to facilitate change in eating behavior. These include a campaign on less oil, salt and sugar in their cuisines. The launch of this had led management staff serving healthy food to staff at work. Monthly fruits and healthy food give-aways also help sustain their efforts in creating a mindset change for the selection of healthier food.

Periodic talks on the subject rounds up their effort to arm staff with the necessary skills and knowledge in acquiring a healthy diet. As a result of the programme employees showed a significant improvement in health awareness and management of work-life balance.

Their successful WHP programme also resulted in improved staff morale. In the areas of health and wellness related benefits, over 97% of employees saw SMU as becoming the Best Place to Work.

By strategically cultivating healthier bodies and brighter minds, the vision of SMU as an "Employer of Choice" can become a reality.

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