This one time, at orientation camp...

JULY is when Cupid is overworked – on university campuses, that is.

Orientation camps are proving to be so effective at getting boys and girls into relationships, organizers have scored funding for their work.

The Social Development Unit (SDU) initiative launched in 2003, Project Network, has co-funded 242 events at the three big campuses – the National University of Singapore (NUS), Nanyang Technological University (NTU) and Singapore Management University (SMU).

The SDU is not hard-selling anything. Instead, said its spokesman, its aim is “to equip undergraduates with social skills and to maximise social interaction opportunities for them”

She declined to say how much money goes into sponsorships. To obtain funding, student leaders must appeal to romance-friendly sponsors. For instance, activities must have a gender ratio of at least 60 to 40. They must also plan for adequate social interaction.

Attendees are well aware of this “match fixing”.

Miss Estelle Low, 19, a second-year mass communications student at NTU, met her current boyfriend at camp.

“We are seen as a viable target group,” she said adding that it was an “optimum period” for students to meet mates.

“In junior college, our lives were still very stressful. And at the workplace, there will be fewer opportunities for us to fall in love.”

The guise of an orientation camp is convenient.

Guy-girl pairing activities are fixtures of orientation programs. As NUS Kent Ridge Hall orientation chairman Mohamad Rizal, 23, points out: “We didn’t have to include more ‘lovey-dovey’ activities in our proposal...The SDU was happy to sponsor us.

The hall’s activities, like The Dating Game, call for freshmen to ask a senior of the opposite sex to dinner, even if it means serenading them in public.

Secret Pal, too, has become a staple. Here, boys and girls are paired up and write anonymously to each other.

At NTU and SMU campuses, piggy-back girls or pass the tissue paper (right) provide plenty of opportunities for students to interact with peers of the opposite sex and jump-start dating for some of them.

BY EMILY LEK

IN THE MOOD FOR LOVE: University orientation camps (above) get young men and women together so well, the SDU is chipping in with sponsorships. Games such as pass the tissue paper (right) provide plenty of opportunities for students to interact with peers of the opposite sex and jump-start dating for some of them.

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