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**Headline: Over 50% of SMU law students volunteer at its pro bono centre**

## **Over 50% of SMU law students volunteer at its pro bono centre**



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SINGAPORE - More than half of the Singapore Management University (SMU) law students volunteer at its pro bono centre.

The centre, located within the new School of Law building, has seen more than 500 cases since 2013 and relies on the students to help run it.

The 554 students take turns to man the centre's hotline and help-desk services from 8.30am to 6pm, Mondays to Fridays, and perform administrative tasks to aid the lawyers at SMU's free legal clinics, held every Friday evening.

Associate Professor Rathna N. Koman, the centre's director, said the students currently perform an average of 37 hours of pro bono work a student, based on the 2013 graduating batch. This is a 60 per cent increase from 2009.

The free legal clinic sees around six to 12 clients at each of its Friday evening sessions.

Prof Rathna said that most of the cases they handle involve a crime, or are related to employment and family disputes. The centre has also assisted clients who have legal issues with organisations, including government agencies.

On Friday (Oct 6), RHT Rajan Menon Foundation signed a commitment of \$300,000 to the SMU Pro Bono Centre, to be delivered over five years.

Mr Tan Chong Huat, chairman of the foundation and senior partner of RHTLaw Taylor Wessing, said the monetary contribution combines with the law firm's commitment to provide the centre with lawyers and expertise to improve the pro bono work done by the centre as well as train the students.

This is to ensure that the centre can provide better services in future.