

# UMS has produced 35,848 graduates

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By Chok Sim Yee

**KOTA KINABALU:** Only 41 per cent of the 815 academics at Universiti Malaysia Sabah (UMS) hold a doctorate, according to immediate past chairman of UMS Board of Directors Tan Sri Datuk Abdul Hamid Egeh.

He stressed the need for more of the teaching staff to obtain PhD qualifications so that they were better able to produce skilled graduates, blessed with a love of the country and willingness to serve in any capacity.

Nonetheless, Abdul Hamid said the university was presently undergoing a transformation under the tenure of the fourth vice chancellor Datuk Prof Dr Mohd Harun Abdullah, who had prepared a strategic plan for 2013-2017.

"The aim of the plan is not only to sustain UMS' excellence but also to propel UMS towards international prominence.

"I am confident that the objectives of Datuk Dr Harun's plan will be realized, and that UMS will one day be at the academic forefront in terms of research and development," he said at his farewell dinner organized by UMS here on Monday.

He added that former Prime Minister Tun Mahathir Mohamad had said that if Malaysia ever produced a Nobel Prize winner, he or she would certainly come from UMS.

Abdul Hamid, who will be 80 this October, also spoke highly of the new UMS Board of Directors chairman Tun Zaki Tun Azmi, whom he said was an internationally renowned jurist, acknowledged and respected for the latter's acute legal mind by the Commonwealth of Nations.

"His high standing and status in Malaysian society and his vast experience will be a most valuable asset, serving to elevate Sabah's premiere academic institution to greater heights," he said, urging Harun and his colleagues to extend their fullest cooperation to Zaki.

"After almost 19 years as chairman, tonight marks the end of my formal association with UMS. As I pass the baton into the secure and steady hands of my successor, I am confident that this institution is entering a new era of promise and optimism."

Abdul Hamid recalled the establishment of UMS, which he had lobbied passionately for since the time he became a member of the Higher Education Advisory Council of Malaysia, under the chairmanship of the late Tun Mohd Suffian Hashim, his former Lord President. The lobbying intensified when he was appointed as Sabah's representative on the Majlis Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia.

"During one particular memorable meeting, I argued vigorously with the representative of the Federal Treasury, who said the establishment of a university in Sabah was not a priority."

UMS began operation in 1994, and Abdul Hamid was appointed as the university's first chairman.

Abdul Hamid said UMS started with three schools and one centre for the Promotion of Knowledge and Language Learning, and expanded to 13 schools and three research institutes offering courses across the disciplines at both undergraduate and postgraduate levels.

The number of students has also grown from about 300 in 1994 to 15,000 today.

"To date, 35,848 students have fulfilled their ambitions and graduated from UMS with pride."

Towards the end of his speech, Abdul Hamid pointed out that UMS must resist the pressures of rampant commercialism.

"Under no circumstances should UMS bow to pressure and permit a petrol filling station to be built on campus.

"To do so would be to risk spoiling the pristine natural environment for which the university is celebrated."

Abdul Hamid was born on October 10, 1933 at Kg Tetabuan, Sandakan. Abdul and his spouse Puan Sri Datin Zainab Hj Aman are blessed with two sons and a daughter.

His work experience include being the State Secretary, Inti Kolej Kinabalu Sdn Bhd chairman, Sabah Bank Bhd chairman, member of the board of directors of Bank Negara Malaysia, Sabah Economic Planning United chairman, and Si Kiong Industry chairman.

In his speech, Harun expressed his appreciation and gratitude towards Abdul Hamid for his contribution and commitment for 18 years at UMS.



Abdul Hamid (second right) hands over his post to Zaki, witnessed by Dr Harun (right).