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 Egoh.

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 willing to serve in any capacity.

Notably, Abdul Hamid said the university was presently undergoing a transformation under the tenure of the fourth vice chancellor, Dato' 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 Dato' Dr Harun's plan will be realized, and that UMS will one day be at the academic forefront in terms of research," Abdul Hamid 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 new world leader, it would be from UMS. "Otherwise, we would certainly come from UMS," he assured.

Abdul Hamid, who will be 80 this October, also spoke highly of the new UMS Board of Directors chairman Tun Zaki Tun Amin, 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 premier academic institution to greater heights," he said, urging Harun and his colleagues to extend their past 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," he added.

Abdul Hamid recalled the establishment of UMS, which he helped lobby for with his former colleague Tun M, in 1994 to 2003.

Under no circumstances should UMS bow to pressure and resist the pressures of rampant commercialization," he said at his farewell dinner.

"To do so would be to risk spoiling the pristine nature for which the university is celebrated." Under no circumstances should UMS bow to pressure and resist the pressures of rampant commercialization," he said at his farewell dinner.

"To date, 35,848 students have graduated, blessed with a spouse Puan Sri Datin Zainab Zainal, 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 board, and SL Kiong Industry chairman.

In his speech, Abdul Hamid expressed his appreciation and gratitude towards Abdul Harun and his colleagues to extend their past cooperation to Zaki.

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Towards the end of his speech, Abdul Hamid pointed out that UMS must resist the pressures of rampant commercialization. "Under no circumstances should UMS bow to pressure and resist the pressures of rampant commercialization," he said at his farewell dinner.

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"During one particular memorable meeting, I argued vigorously with the then 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 graduated, blessed with a spouse Puan Sri Datin Zainab Zainal, two sons and a daughter," he added.

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