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KUCHING: Universiti Malaysia Sarawak (Unimas) must continue to prioritise on building research culture to make it a premier research-oriented institution in the region.

Its former vice-chancellor Dato Prof Dr Morshidi Sirat said academic research was one of the identified strengths to put the university on stronger footing apart from furthering its pursuit of academic and intellectual excellence.

"We can realise this mission through the support and intensive planning of the management. The university must also pay more attention when a scheme or research area of expertise has been identified," he said during the breaking of fast together with members of Unimas Board of Directors at Riverside Majestic Hotel here Tuesday.

Also present were Unimas' vice-chancellor Prof Dato Dr Mohd Kadim Suaidi and chairman of the Board of Directors Datu Dr Hatta Solhi.

To remain a well respected, relevant and competitive public institution, Morshidi said that Unimas must continue to be the reference centre for academicians, community and industries.

Morshidi, who is now director-general of Higher Education Department, thus emphasised the importance of maintaining close relationship at all levels whether at Unimas, higher education institutes (IPT), community and industries. He, however, also noted that the main challenge today was to remain relevant to the current needs and demands of higher education.

"It is therefore crucial that the university's management and administration make improvements from time to time in response to the need of the ever changing environment.

"With the intense competition from public and private universities, Unimas must continue to aim higher so as to be recognised as a leading university of choice for the students," he added.

With the experience, expertise as well as the teaching-learning facility and research in Unimas, Morshidi was confident that the university could become the university-of-choice in the region and in nurturing quality graduates for the country's employment sector.

"I am sure Unimas will continue to play big role in the development of higher education if it continues to operate in line with the improvements and changes to be implemented within the National Higher Education Strategic Plan.

"Having identified the strengths and potentials, Unimas can even go further to become an institution of academic excellence in Malaysia particularly, and at the international level in general," he added.

Source: Borneo Post Online