

Campus

Pact to increase statistical literacy

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STATISTICS play a far bigger role in daily life than what most of us think. Such information exists at home, work and is part and parcel of the decision-making process for people and organisations.

It is the processing of such data and the need for specialists in the field, which the country is lacking in, that has brought together Sunway University and the Department of Statistics Malaysia.

The two organisations signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on Tuesday with the aim of promoting education, research and training in statistics.

Under the agreement, Sunway University academic staff and students would be allowed to tap into the department's rich pool of statistical resources, applied knowledge and expertise.

This collaboration is the 14th MoU signed between the department and a local institution of higher learning and the fourth with a private university.

Sunway Group founder and chairman Tan Sri Dr Jeffrey Cheah witnessed the MoU signing at a ceremony held at the university's Subang Jaya campus.

The department's chief statistician Datuk Sri Dr Mohd Uzir



Prof Graeme Wilkinson (second from left) and Dr Mohd Uzir exchanging documents at the ceremony. Looking on are (from left) Prof Pua, Dr Cheah and Nazaria.

Mahidin and Sunway University vice-chancellor Prof Graeme Wilkinson signed the document.

Cheah, who is also Sunway University's chancellor, described the initiative as beneficial, saying proper research could be done with accurate statistics.

He called on the public and private sector to have more partnerships for better outcomes.

"This sort of collaboration is beneficial to the country as the government has a lot of resources in many areas where the private sector can tap into and vice-versa.

"We should learn from each

other because we are all in it together," he said.

Sunway University deputy vice-chancellor Prof Pua Eng Chong and the department's deputy chief statistician Nazaria Baharudin were also present at the event.

Dr Mohd Uzir said the collaboration signified a smart partnership between the two parties.

The department will provide selected demographic and socio-economic micro data for research purposes and the development of new knowledge for those at Sunway University.

"Hopefully the students will enhance their skills in data mining using a large scale data set and therefore increasing analytical ability.

He added that the partnership would also encourage officers from the department to share the accurate methodology in the interpretation of official statistics.

"This will surely increase statistical literacy among academicians and students," said Dr Mohd Uzir, pointing out that data specialists are greatly needed in various fields.

Sunway University vice-chancellor Prof Graeme Wilkinson echoed his sentiment and described data as "king".

He said that there was indeed a lack of data specialists and scientists, and the university is trying its best to bridge the gap by providing programmes that are relevant to data management.

The higher-learning institution currently offers a degree programme called the Information System Business analytics where students learn about data mining, data exploration and big data techniques.

Sunway University's School of Mathematical Sciences will also introduce a new degree programme in Industrial Statistics in the near future.

This is to meet the demands for

data specialists and scientists with outstanding knowledge of statistical techniques.

Describing the MoU as a "big step forward", Prof Wilkinson said it was a great honour for the university to be among the first few private universities selected by the department to promote education and training in the field of statistics and to expand the use of official statistics for academic research, scholarship and publication purposes.

"Statistics are vital in advanced research, particularly in relation to economic and social matters.

"If huge amounts of information and data are analysed properly, great value can be retrieved from it.

"The information provided by DOSM helps the university in economics and business research and also research in relation to sustainability," he says, adding that DOSM's data is useful to train students in big data techniques.

He noted that the department had been at the forefront of transforming the country's official statistics system into one that is comprehensive, timely and reliable.

"It also continues to enhance its Internet-based data system for easy access to the public," he added.

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