

New university heads

NANYANG TECHNOLOGICAL UNIVERSITY

Professor Subra Suresh, 61, a leading American scientist, who was handpicked by former US president Barack Obama to helm the National Science Foundation in the United States, will succeed Professor Bertil Andersson as the fourth president of the university.

Prof Suresh, who will take over in January next year, was until recently president of Carnegie Mellon University in Pittsburgh.

NATIONAL UNIVERSITY OF SINGAPORE

The university's provost Tan Eng Chye, 55, will succeed its current president Tan Cherk Chuan, 58. Professor Tan Eng Chye, a mathematician and an NUS alumnus, has served as provost for the past 10 years. He will take over the helm in January next year.

SINGAPORE UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY AND DESIGN

The university, set up in 2009 to offer students a multidisciplinary education cutting across fields like engineering, design and the humanities, has yet to name the successor to its current president Thomas Magnanti.

The university had said the global search for a successor to Professor Magnanti, the former engineering dean of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, began early last year and it "does not preclude Singaporeans".



At the request of the SMU board, Professor Arnoud De Meyer has agreed to assume, on a part-time basis, a role in continuing to help shape SMU-X, an experiential learning programme. PHOTO: SMU

SMU in global search for new president

Current head Arnoud De Meyer has asked to step down by the end of next year

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It is turning out to be a year for leadership renewal at the local universities with yet another one, the Singa-

pore Management University (SMU), announcing a global search for a new president.

Earlier this month, SMU board chairman Ho Kwon Ping sent an e-mail to the faculty and staff announcing that current president Arnoud De Meyer, who took over the helm seven years ago, has asked to step down by the end of next year.

Mr Ho said that as much as the board of trustees would have wanted the 63-year-old to continue, the board also fully respects his desire to step down.

However, at the request of the board, Prof De Meyer has agreed to assume, on a part-time basis, a role in continuing to help shape SMU-X, an experiential learning programme where students tackle real-world problems by taking on projects from companies and community organisations.

Mr Ho said SMU-X - the brainchild of Prof De Meyer - has gained much traction and become a buzzword for experiential learning, and is now well on its way to becoming an integral part of SMU's pedagogical DNA.

A search committee comprising several board members has been set up, and will work with a global executive search firm to drive the search for SMU's fifth president.

Earlier this year, The Straits Times reported that the National University of Singapore (NUS), Nanyang Technological University and Singapore University of Technology and Design were all searching worldwide for new heads to lead the institutions in their next phase of growth.

The leadership renewal comes at a time when Singapore's tertiary institutions, mindful of the disruptions in the economy, are revamping their curriculum and launching work-study programmes to better prepare their students for work.

A few SMU academics have suggested that Professor Lily Kong, who moved from NUS two years ago to take up the position of provost at SMU, is a strong contender for the post.

Prof Kong, who is the first woman to be appointed provost of a publicly funded university here, had served in several senior academic positions at NUS, including vice-provost of academic personnel, before moving to SMU. Well-known internationally as a social-cultural and urban geographer, she has over two decades of solid experience as an educator, researcher and senior academic leader.

Mr Ho, in his e-mail to faculty, praised Prof De Meyer's leadership, saying that he had "more than delivered as president of the university, leading SMU through a new phase of growth and excellence in many important ways".

Besides SMU-X, he highlighted Prof De Meyer's involvement in SMU's internationalisation efforts and the launch of postgraduate programmes that have transformed the university from a "single product" university to a "multi-product" university.

Prof De Meyer is a leading figure in business school management, having spent more than two decades in Insead and served as the founding dean of the school's Asia campus in Singapore. He headed Cambridge University's Judge Business School before becoming the fourth president of SMU in 2010.

Asked about the decision to step down, Prof De Meyer said over the last few years, SMU has become a "multi-faceted university", adding more undergraduate and postgraduate programmes, providing continuing education for working adults and strengthening its research focus. He added: "By the end of next year, I would have been president of SMU for eight years. It is the right moment to hand over the reins to someone else who will lead the university through its next phase of growth."

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