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Professor Lily Kong will begin her term as president of SMU on Jan 1, 2019. (Photo: SMU)

SINGAPORE: Social scientist Lily Kong will take over the helm at Singapore Management University (SMU), as its fifth president next year.

In a media release on Tuesday (Apr 3) SMU said Prof Kong will begin her term on Jan 1, 2019, taking over from current president Professor Arnoud De Meyer who will be stepping down.

Prof Kong is the first Singaporean to helm the 18-year-old university.

Well known internationally as a social, cultural and urban geographer, Prof Kong is widely regarded as a thought leader in the study of social and cultural change in Asian cities.

Prof Kong made history in September 2015 when she became the first woman provost of a publicly funded university in Singapore.

Commenting on her latest appointment, Prof Kong said: "I am deeply honoured to be appointed the fifth President of SMU. I look forward to the extraordinary opportunity to lead the university into its third decade and am committed to do so with energy and enthusiasm.

"It is with personal humility and institutional ambition that I approach this immense honour and responsibility," she added.

In announcing Prof Kong's appointment, chairman of the SMU Board of Trustees, Ho Kwon Ping said: "We are very pleased that our seven-month search process culminated in the University appointing, for the first time in its history, an internal candidate and a social scientist as President.

"Professor Kong's candidature stands out from a long list of over a hundred candidates and an impressive shortlist of a handful of highly qualified candidates," Mr Ho added.

Mr Ho noted that in her role as SMU provost, Prof Kong has been highly instrumental in leading and driving many successes in all major academic aspects of the University enhancing SMU's student and faculty quality, developing educational programmes and growing research impact.

Mr Ho also praised outgoing president Prof De Meyer, who will be SMU's longest-serving President after being at the helm for more than eight years when his term concludes on Dec 31.

He noted Prof De Meyer's role in launching SMU Vision 2025, a 10-year vision for the varsity to be a great and iconic global-city university in Asia and SMU-X, an experiential learning programme which has become an integral part of SMU's innovative pedagogy.

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After stepping down, Prof De Meyer will assume a primary and executive role, on a part-time basis, to "shape and shepherd SMU-X through its critical formative stage", the university noted.

Source: CNA/am