

# S'porean social scientist to be SMU president

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Geographer Lily Kong, 53, who made history three years ago as the first woman provost of a publicly funded university here, is scoring another first.

She will soon be the first Singaporean academic and social scientist to helm the 18-year-old Singapore Management University (SMU). The first three presidents of SMU were from American universities, while current president Arnoud De Meyer is a Belgian.

SMU, which has stepped up its research and course offerings in the social sciences, announced Professor Kong's appointment as its next president yesterday. She assumes her new role at the start of next year.

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

SMU board chairman Ho Kwon Ping said the university launched a global search for its new president after Professor De Meyer asked to step down by the end of this year.

Mr Ho 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."



Prof Lily Kong will be the first Singaporean to lead Singapore Management University.  
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"The fact that Professor Kong is both a woman and a Singaporean is a nice plus, but was not the deciding factor," he said.

Prof Kong was an academic at the National University of Singapore for more than two decades before joining SMU.

As provost, she implemented major revamps to the university's undergraduate admission process, including the introduction of Discovery Day sessions.

Prof Kong also helped introduce new interdisciplinary majors and tracks, including the popular politics, law and economics course.

She said she was "deeply honoured" to be appointed.

"It is an exciting time for growth and expansion into new directions, some of which has already started."

This included expanding into other disciplines and catering to groups such as working adults.

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