

# SMU's longest-serving president honoured

## Arnoud De Meyer credited with transforming university into a 'multi-product' one

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Singapore Management University (SMU) president Arnoud De Meyer said he was surprised when he was approached eight years ago to take over the helm of the university.

After all, most of his academic leadership experience had been in post-graduate business education.

He was head of Cambridge University's Judge Business School then. Prior to that, he had spent more than two decades in another leading business school, Insead, and served as the founding dean of the school's Asia campus in Singapore.

"I did wonder if I can contribute much to a university that, at that time, was mostly an undergraduate business school," said Professor De

Meyer, who is SMU's longest-serving president and will hand over the baton to his No. 2, SMU provost Lily Kong, 53, in January.

The Belgian said he decided to become the university's fourth president in 2010, as he was subsequently convinced that SMU was still "a blank sheet of paper" that he could write on.

"SMU was still a young university, 10 years old. I felt I could mould it and shape it further," he said in a recent interview with The Straits Times.

Under Prof De Meyer's leadership, SMU has continued to deliver a "transformative education experience", said SMU chairman Ho Kwon Ping at a farewell ceremony for the 64-year-old don last night attended by Singapore's President and SMU patron Halimah Yacob, Education Minister Ong Ye Kung, and SMU's

honorary patron and distinguished senior fellow Tony Tan Keng Yam.

Mr Ho said that under Prof De Meyer, SMU forged partnerships with leading foreign universities that allowed for international exchange programmes for students, expanded the range of undergraduate programmes and also launched postgraduate ones.

In recent years, it stepped up its provision of continuing education for working adults and strengthened its research focus.

All this transformed SMU from a "single-product" university to a "multi-product" one, said Mr Ho, just before Prof De Meyer was conferred the title of "SMU University Professorship".

SMU said the title is the highest appointment bestowed on a very select number of faculty to recognise significant accomplishments in research, and outstanding contributions to the university, the profession and the community.

Mr Ho did not leave out Prof De Meyer's brainchild – the award-win-

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ning "SMU-X" programme and its overseas version, named "SMU-XO". Under the programme, students take on projects from companies and organisations to solve real-world problems. Mr Ho said the programme will become an integral part of SMU's pedagogical DNA, and be viewed as a defining step in SMU's progress and development.

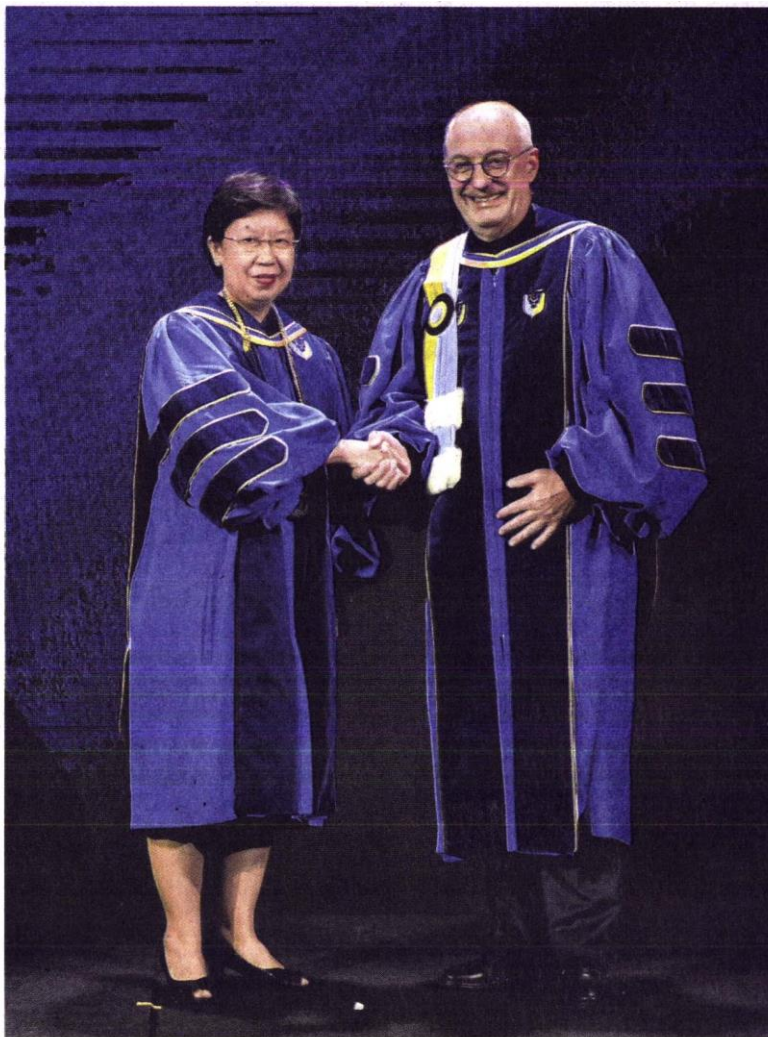
Prof De Meyer will stay on with the university on a part-time basis after January. Among his roles, he will shape and shepherd SMU-X further.

Mr Ong, who also spoke at the event, recalled Prof De Meyer's tenure as the founding dean of Insead's Asia campus in Singapore from 1999 to 2002. He attributed the success of the campus, which draws many students from around the world, partly to the professor who strongly believed in Asia's growing potential and recognised the role that the business school could play in developing talent.

Mr Ong thanked Prof De Meyer for his contributions to the wider Singapore community, which include serving on the boards of the National Research Foundation and the Singapore Symphony Orchestra and as a member of the Advisory Council on Community Relations in Defence.

Said Mr Ong: "From technology research to defence to music – we have many things to thank Arnoud for."

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Singapore Management University's outgoing president Arnoud De Meyer and his successor, SMU provost Lily Kong, at a farewell ceremony for the 64-year-old don last night. ST PHOTO: ARIFFIN JAMAR

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