

# New SMU business school dean aims to boost SMEs

By **CAI YONG**

caiyong@sph.com.sg

GERARD George, newly appointed dean of Singapore Management University's (SMU) Lee Kong Chian School of Business (LKCSB), hopes to use his management expertise to strengthen SMU's catalytic role in the local business ecosystem.

Currently deputy dean of Imperial College London's Business School, Prof George also serves as academic director of the college's Elite Programme. Sponsored by the London Stock Exchange, the programme aims to help promising small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) realise their full potential.

Serving also as editor of the *Academy of Management Journal*, a leading management journal, and having written two books on entrepreneurship, the professor has considerable expertise in growing SMEs.

He said: "How do you take (companies) that are 20, 30, 50 million dollars and make them 300, 500 million ones and global players? That's (something) I can bring to the table."

The crux lies in assem-



**Prof George:** Will take over as dean of SMU's Lee Kong Chian School of Business (LKCSB) on Jan 1 next year

bling an entrepreneurial ecosystem. For the professor, the building blocks are already in place; the region is a hotbed of activity.

What is needed is a platform to get disparate elements – such as investors, entrepreneurs and business development specialists – closer together, and LKCSB can take the lead, he said.

As for goals, Prof George hopes to engage local businesses more. "I want to integrate better with the business community here. That involves . . . making these connections to the community, and bringing them

back into the curriculum."

This ties in with his aim of making LKCSB one of the top 20 institutions in the world. He speaks, however, not in terms of any particular ranking but in terms of thought leadership, quality of teaching and student experience.

Prof George's five-year term will begin on Jan 1 next year. At 43, he will be the youngest dean at SMU. He will replace Howard Thomas, who was appointed in 2010 and who will remain with SMU as distinguished professor of strategic management and management education.