

Veteran NUS don will be SIT's next president

Prof will join institute as president-designate from Sept 1; current head will return to SMU next Feb

By MATTHIAS CHEW

A VETERAN National University of Singapore (NUS) don has been named the next president of the Singapore Institute of Technology (SIT).

NUS vice-provost for education Tan Thiam Soon, 56, who is also a professor from the Department of Civil and Environmental Engineering, will join the institute on Sept 1 as its president-designate. He will become president on Feb 1 next year.



Prof Tan Thiam Soon (above) will succeed Prof Tan Chin Tiong, who has headed SIT since its inception in 2009.

His appointment comes as the SIT is expected to take on a bigger role as the Government expands the number of university places here.

He succeeds Professor Tan Chin Tiong, 63, who has headed SIT since its inception in 2009.

Prof Tan, who is on secondment from Singapore Management University (SMU), will return to the university as senior adviser to president Arnoud De Meyer, and as a professor in its business school next February.

He will play an "instrumental" role in creating a stronger global footprint for the uni-

versity, particularly in China, said SMU.

Under his watch, SIT took in its first cohort of 500 students in 2010. It has 1,500 students now, and enrolment is expected to grow to 2,000 annually by 2015.

The institute partners 10 overseas universities to offer 24 undergraduate courses targeted at polytechnic diploma holders in Singapore.

Ranging from game design to nursing, these degrees are conferred by the overseas partners, which include Wheelock College in the United States and the Technical University of Munich.

It has been identified by a committee appointed by the Government as a "possible platform" for a fifth, practice-oriented university.

Yesterday, incoming president Tan Thiam Soon told The Straits Times that, after 26 years at NUS, he looks forward to the challenge of heading an institution whose students are quite different from those at NUS. Catering to students who preferred a more hands-on approach in education will require him to "think out of the box", he said.

A key objective, he pointed out, was to ensure that SIT graduates remained employable.

With the Government yet to make the decision on a fifth university, it was unlikely the SIT would add many more new courses for now, he added.

He said: "I look forward to bringing new perspectives into developing programmes that will enhance the talent of SIT students and nurture them to have a strong entrepreneurial and innovative bent."

mattchew@sph.com.sg