

DBS chief executive Piyush Gupta to be new SMU chairman

He will take over from founding chairman Ho Kwon Ping in January

DBS Bank chief executive Piyush Gupta will be the new chairman of Singapore Management University (SMU) from Jan 12 next year. He will be taking over from founding chairman Ho Kwon Ping, who will step down on Jan 11.

Mr Ho, 69, accepted the Government's invitation in 1997 to create SMU, Singapore's third university, and led it for 25 years.

In a statement yesterday, SMU said that Mr Ho and former president and deputy prime minister Tony Tan Keng Yam laid out the features that became the university's calling card: Its strong management and social science offerings, as well as delivering a broad-based education to students.

In 2000, SMU welcomed its first batch of 306 students. It now has more than 12,000 students and over 36,000 alumni.

For his contributions, Mr Ho, founder and executive chairman of Banyan Tree Holdings and Laguna Resorts and Hotels, was given the Meritorious Service Medal in 2009.

In 2017, he received one of the nation's highest honours – the prestigious Distinguished Service Order (Darjah Utama Bakti Cemerlang) award – in the National Day Awards.

SMU said yesterday that Mr Ho pushed the university to be more than a business school. Under his leadership, SMU grew from having just a school of business to a university with eight schools focusing on fields such as computing and information systems, economics, law and social sciences.

Mr Ho said: "It has been one of the most significant journeys of my life to have been part of the team of visionary people from faculty to students, management to

trustees, who believed that we could make a difference for young Singaporeans.

"My guiding principle from the very beginning to now, is that nothing can hold us back from achieving our greatest dreams, except our own self-limiting fear of failure, innovation, change."

He added: "I retire now with the deepest confidence that what we put in place over the last 25 years will be a solid foundation upon which an even bolder, idealistic vision can become reality."

His successor, Mr Gupta, 62, has been chief executive and director of DBS Group since 2009. He has also been a member of the SMU board of trustees since Jan 12.

He said: "In these fast-changing, disruptive times, universities play a key role, not just in leading and shaping thinking through cutting-edge research but also in training our young people in multi-disciplinary ways of problem-solving.

"Kwon Ping and the first generation of pioneers have set an extraordinary benchmark of success, and I look forward to building on their tremendous achievements, working with the board of trustees and university leadership to take SMU to the next level."

SMU president Lily Kong said that the university was deeply indebted to Mr Ho for his wisdom and counsel.

Education Minister Chan Chun Sing also thanked Mr Ho for his contribution in establishing SMU as Singapore's first autonomous university.

"I look forward to working with Piyush and am confident that he will build on Kwon Ping's good work to take SMU to greater heights," he said.



FOUNDATION FOR GROWTH

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MR HO KWON PING



ROLE OF UNIVERSITIES

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MR PIYUSH GUPTA