

New NTU president has history of ties with Singapore

He had previously helmed US National Science Foundation and Carnegie Mellon University

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A leading American scientist, who was handpicked by former president Barack Obama to helm the National Science Foundation in the United States, was yesterday named the fourth president of Nanyang Technological University (NTU).

Professor Subra Suresh, 61, who will take over from current NTU president Bertil Andersson next year, had until recently served as president of Carnegie Mellon University, an institution that helped transform the city of Pittsburgh through advances in technology, services and medicine.

NTU board chairman Koh Boon Hwee, who announced the appointment of Prof Suresh yesterday, said succession planning began last year with a search for candidates in Singapore and globally. The eight-member search committee chaired by Mr Koh unanimously selected Prof Suresh for the top role at NTU.

Besides NTU, the National University of Singapore (NUS) and the Sin-

gapore University of Technology and Design (SUTD) are also searching worldwide for new heads.

Noting that NTU has made "phenomenal progress" under Professor Andersson's leadership, Mr Koh said: "The appointment of the next president is crucial to continue that momentum and to elevate NTU in its next significant phase of growth and development."

Prof Suresh is considered one of the most distinguished scientists in the US, if not the world.

As director of the National Science Foundation between 2010 and 2013, he oversaw an annual budget of US\$7 billion (S\$9.6 billion) that supports fundamental research and innovation in all fields of science and engineering in more than 2,000 institutions across the US.

Prof Suresh holds the distinction of being the only university president elected to all three US national academies – of Sciences, Engineering and Medicine, and is one of the few elected foreign members of the Chinese Academy of Sciences.

He is also the first Asian-born professor to have served as engineering dean of the famed Massachusetts In-

stitute of Technology (MIT), where he attained his doctorate.

His undergraduate degree was from the Indian Institute of Technology, Madras in Chennai.

At MIT, Prof Suresh was the principal faculty coordinator for the formation of the Singapore-MIT Alliance for Research and Technology centre. For the past several years, he has also served as a member of both the Academic Research Council and the International Academic Advisory Panel of Singapore's Ministry of Education.

On his appointment as the fourth president of NTU, Prof Suresh said he has been interacting with Singapore, including the university, for more than 25 years. "It has been a privilege to witness and also participate in the impressive rise of both Singapore and NTU on the international stage," he added.

Although it is a young university, NTU has been able to attract global technology leaders like BMW, Rolls-Royce and Siemens to its campus, said Prof Suresh.

Asked about his immediate priority, he said: "I will go on a listening tour across campus and across town

GLOBALLY RECOGNISED LEADER

I welcome Prof Subra Suresh's appointment as the next president of NTU, and joining Singapore's fraternity of educators... He is a globally recognised leader in academia... I would like to thank Prof Andersson for his many contributions to NTU. In his six years as president of NTU, Prof Andersson has led NTU to prepare our young well to lead fulfilling lives, significantly elevated the standard of research and raised the international reputation of NTU.



MINISTER FOR EDUCATION (HIGHER EDUCATION AND SKILLS) ONG YE KUNG,
in a Facebook post

that engages the current and former members of the NTU community."

Prof Suresh said he was grateful to Prof Andersson for his "very im-

pactful leadership" of NTU.

A renowned Swedish plant biochemist and winner of the prestigious Wilhelm Exner Medal, Prof Andersson, 69, took over NTU's helm in 2011. He is also a member of the Nobel Foundation's board of trustees.

Under his tenure, NTU ramped up research and, as a result, rose in position in many international rankings. These include the Quacquarelli Symonds (QS) global league table, where it went from being ranked 74th in 2010 to 11th this year.

Yesterday, NTU was also ranked the world's top young university for the fourth straight year by QS.

Prof Andersson said the future of NTU "is in safe hands" under Prof Suresh, adding: "Wherever I am in the world in the future, I will continue to be a proud ambassador of NTU and Singapore."

Meanwhile, SUTD and NUS are expected to announce new heads by the year end. MIT professor Thomas Magnanti heads SUTD, while NUS is led by Professor Tan Chorh Chuan, who is due to take up a senior position in the Health Ministry.

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Professor Subra Suresh, seen here with his wife Mary, until recently served as president of Carnegie Mellon University. He said he has been interacting with Singapore for over 25 years, adding: "It has been a privilege to witness and also participate in the impressive rise of both Singapore and NTU." PHOTO: CARNEGIE MELLON UNIVERSITY



NTU's current president Bertil Andersson said the future of NTU "is in safe hands" under Prof Suresh.