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HOMING IN ON QUALITY RESEARCH: Prof Andersson (left, with Dr Su) will help NTU integrate its departments to raise the quality of research. He will also recruit talent for the university.

Top European scientist to take on No. 2 post at NTU

BY TAN HUI YEE

COME April, a top European scientist will take on the provost's job at Nanyang Technological University (NTU).

Professor Bertil Andersson, a biochemist by training and the chief executive of the European Science Foundation, will help the university integrate its departments to raise the quality of research.

He will be No. 2 to NTU president Su Guaning.

Dr Su, announcing this yesterday, said Prof Andersson

will focus on drawing together the strengths of NTU's various schools to come up with research proposals to attract funds. He will also recruit talent for the university.

Prof Andersson, who is vice-president of the European Research Advisory Board and a trustee of the Nobel Foundation, said he could tap his contacts "to try to recruit very good scientists from Europe".

The university's plans to expand its student population - tentatively from about 18,500 today to about 21,000 by 2011 - mean that it will

have to step up recruitment of faculty members, from 70 to 80 a year to about 100 a year.

Prof Andersson will take over from Dr Er Meng Hwa, who has been acting provost for the last six months. NTU used to have two deputy presidents with specific portfolios, but they did not have powers that cut across the different sections of the university.

Prof Andersson was selected after an eight-month search, from an initial list of 650 top academics from around the world.

The former rector of Linköping University in Sweden, he

is now a visiting professor at London's Imperial College. He is also a member of the scientific advisory board of the National Research Foundation, which develops policies to intensify research and development in Singapore.

He named the interface between biology and engineering as a key research area he would look into at NTU.

Asked how far NTU and Singapore were from winning a Nobel prize, Prof Andersson said it does not come easy - such prizes are normally given about 15 years after a discovery.