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SINGAPORE: Nanyang Technological University (NTU) chairman Koh Boon Hwee will step down from his position after 28 years with the institution. Mr Koh will step down on Mar 31, and he will be succeeded by chairman of the National Arts Council (NAC) Goh Swee Chen, the university said in a news release on Tuesday (Feb 9). She will helm the NTU Board of Trustees from Apr 1.

Mr Koh joined the Board of the then-NTU Council in 1991. He was appointed its chairman on Jul 1, 1993, two years after NTU was inaugurated as a university after the merger of the Nanyang Technological Institute and the National Institute of Education.

After NTU became an autonomous university in 2006, he was appointed the founding chairman of the NTU Board of Trustees.

Mr Koh is also the former chairman of Singtel, Singapore Airlines and DBS Bank.

He was "instrumental" in steering NTU's development from a teaching university predominantly focused on training engineers to a world-class university, said NTU.

"Mr Koh's visionary guidance, skilful governance, and support of the university's leadership have left its mark in every aspect of NTU's development in almost three decades, from its education and research to infrastructure and administration," the release read.

"Providing a stable and solid foundation for NTU, he has worked alongside five NTU chancellors, seven Singaporean education ministers and all four NTU presidents."

When Mr Koh was first appointed chairman in 1993, the university had only six schools including NIE, said the university in the release. NTU now has 15 schools in five academic colleges, including the Lee Kong Chian School of Medicine.

NTU President Subra Suresh said Mr Koh has been "at the heart" of NTU's progress over the years. "We will miss his visionary leadership, sharp strategic insights and wise counsel. However, I am confident that we will continue to benefit from his passionate engagement with NTU in other ways for many more years to come," he added.

Minister for Education Lawrence Wong also thanked Mr Koh for his years of service to NTU. "As the longest-serving university chairman for almost three decades, Boon Hwee's contributions to NTU and the university landscape have been immense," he added.

"He has steered NTU through major milestones such as its formation in the 1990s and its transition to become an autonomous university in 2006. Under his visionary leadership, NTU has grown into a world-class institution with high standards in education."

Ms Goh is the former chairperson of Shell Companies in Singapore, and retired in January 2019. She joined the NTU Board of Trustees in August that year, and also sits on the boards of CapitaLand, Singapore Airlines, SP Group and Woodside Energy (Australia).

She said: "It is an honour for me to succeed Boon Hwee as the Chairman of NTU Board of Trustees. He has done an extraordinary job in stewardship and steering the development of the NTU in the last three decades, alongside the trustees and the various NTU leadership teams.

"For many centuries, education has played a crucial role in the advancement of humankind. The confluence of challenges in the 21st century, amplified by the current COVID-19 pandemic puts even greater emphasis on the purpose of education, building knowledge to improve lives.

"I am committed to work with members of the university community to further strengthen NTU's global and societal impact."

Welcoming Ms Goh to her new role, Prof Suresh said she that has "extensive global experience in diverse fields" that span the business and social sectors.

"We look forward to her leadership as we strive to strengthen NTU's rapidly growing status as a leading university in the world to further expand its impact in Singapore, the region and around the globe," he added.