

# The hunt for 3 new university heads

Besides NUS, NTU and SUTD are also looking for new leaders for their next phase of growth

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It's not just the National University of Singapore (NUS) that is expected to have a new president by next year.

Nanyang Technological University (NTU) and the Singapore University of Technology and Design (SUTD) are also searching worldwide for new heads to lead the institutions in their next phase of growth.

This comes at a time when Singapore's tertiary institutions, mindful of the disruptions in the economy, are revamping their curriculum and launching work-study programmes to better prepare their students for work.

NTU has been headed by renowned Swedish plant biochemist Bertil Andersson, who served as provost for four years at NTU before taking over as president in 2011.

He had served as rector (president) of Linköping University, Sweden, and chief executive of the European Science Foundation before joining NTU. He is also a member of the board of trustees of the Nobel Foundation.

Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) professor Thomas Magnanti was named founding president of SUTD in 2009, three years before the university launched.

Professor Magnanti is an institute professor at MIT – the title is the highest awarded to a faculty member at the elite US institution.

He is also a former dean of MIT's School of Engineering.

NTU did not give the reason for the change in head, but SUTD's board of trustees chairman in a statement to *The Sunday Times* said Prof Magnanti is finishing his term of eight years as founding president of the university and will be leaving his post in December.

But academics in the universities pointed to the fact that Prof Andersson will reach 70 years of age next year, while Prof Magnanti will be 73.

NTU's board chairman Koh Boon Hwee, in an e-mail to the faculty last June, said the search for a new head is expected to take 18 months or more.

He said the position is open to candidates from within NTU as well as national and international top academics with interest in leading the university on its next stage of development and progress.

Mr Koh credited Prof Andersson as NTU's chief change agent. NTU has leapt in several international rankings, including reaching 13th place in the Quacquarelli Symonds World University Rankings last year.

Mr Lee Tzu Yang, chairman of SUTD's board of trustees, said in a statement that the board and university staff value Prof Magnanti's deep experience and commitment as a university leader and world-class academic.

Mr Lee said the global search began early last year and it "does not preclude Singaporeans".

The *Straits Times* reported last week that NUS president Tan Chorh Chuan will next year take up a senior position in the Ministry of

Health, where he had served as director of medical services from 2000 to 2004.

Prof Tan has been leading Singapore's oldest and largest university since December 2008.

While all three presidents remain in their posts, the provosts of the three respective universities have been suggested as their successors: Prof Tan Eng Chye from NUS, Prof Freddy Boey from NTU and Prof Chong Tow Chong from SUTD.

Other names discussed as possible presidents of the three universities include Prof Ho Teck Hua, who is among the world's scientific elite that Singapore has been trying for years to entice back to the country.

Two years ago, the behavioural scientist was persuaded to give up his chaired professorship at the University of California, Berkeley, to take up the position at NUS as deputy president of research and technology.

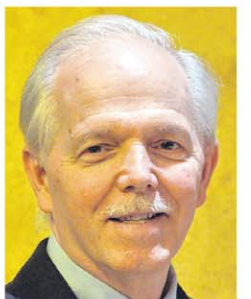
Another possible successor is National Research Foundation chief Low Teck Seng, who has for years been actively involved in shaping Singapore's research and development (R&D) landscape.

He previously served as dean of engineering at NUS and also as founding chief executive officer of Republic Polytechnic. He joined A\*Star as deputy managing director (research) in 2009 and was the founding executive director of A\*Star's Data Storage Institute, where he helped spearhead world-class R&D in data storage technologies.

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Prof Bertil Andersson (NTU)



Prof Thomas Magnanti (SUTD)



Prof Tan Chorh Chuan (NUS)