Star to rebuild New Orleans

URBAN planner Ed Blakely, a star recruit for the University of Sydney only three years ago, is to return to the US as chief of reconstruction for New Orleans.

“There is no bigger job in urban planning,” Professor Blakely said.

He came to Sydney to take up a chair of urban and regional planning, as well as a key advisory post with the city’s 30-year metropolitan growth plan.

He had rare expertise in the repair of urban fabric, having worked in California after bushfires and earthquakes and in New York after the September 11 attack.

Despite his return to the US, Professor Blakely would keep up his teaching and research commitments at Sydney, the university said yesterday.

“Our staff and students will benefit from Ed’s ongoing, hands-on experience in his areas of expertise — suburban economics, urban planning and recovery efforts,” said Tom Kvan, Dean of the Faculty of Architecture, Design and Planning.

Professor Blakely’s latest stay in Australia — he has been a regular visitor — has not been untroubled.

He and other planners became disillusioned by what they saw as a loss of independence in the Sydney metropolitan plan and he joined an architecture faculty with a history of internal division.

Bernard Lane