

## NEWS RELEASE

May 17, 2007

*(Note to journalists: A publication-quality photograph of Mrinalini Rao is available at [http://photo.lib.uic.edu/gallery/MrinaliniRao/DG04\\_09\\_09\\_015](http://photo.lib.uic.edu/gallery/MrinaliniRao/DG04_09_09_015))*

### **UIC scientist, vice provost named U. of I. v.p. for academic affairs**

CHICAGO—The University of Illinois today announced Mrinalini "Meena" Chatta Rao has been named University vice president for academic affairs. The Board of Trustees approved her appointment at its regular meeting in Chicago.

Rao has been vice provost for faculty affairs at the University of Illinois at Chicago since 2002. Her field of academic research is physiology and biophysics in the College of Medicine, and she has a joint appointment in the Department of Medicine. She has been at UIC since 1984.

"Meena Rao brings impeccable academic and administrative credentials to this key U. of I. system position," said President B. Joseph White. "Universities are ultimately defined and judged by academic excellence, and I am confident Professor Rao will provide great leadership in furthering our academic endeavors."

The vice president for academic affairs reports to the president and works closely with the chancellors, provosts, the University Senates Conferences and the faculty Senates at the University's three campuses in Urbana-Champaign, Chicago and Springfield.

Rao will be responsible for defining and shaping strategic academic priorities and directions of the university, providing advice on academic policy issues and supporting academic initiatives.

On behalf of the president, Rao also will chair key University-wide committees and serve on the University Policy Council with the other vice presidents, chancellors and university officers.

Rao said she looks forward to the challenges and opportunities her new position will

present.

"Being named the chief academic officer of a world-class public research university such as the University of Illinois is a great honor as well as a great responsibility," Rao said. "The University's academic mission of teaching and research is vital and vibrant, and my goal is to carry on and extend this proud tradition."

Rao received her master's degree and doctorate in cellular and molecular biology from the University of Michigan. She earned bachelor's and master's degrees in botany from the University of Delhi, India. She also received a diploma in molecular biochemistry from the Indian Institute of Science in Bangalore.

As UIC vice provost Rao oversees all aspects of faculty life, including faculty human resources, promotion and tenure, sabbatical policies and awards for scholarship and teaching. She also oversees faculty development programs, including interactive workshops for department heads, faculty mentoring at various career stages and orientation and mentoring for new faculty and administrators.

In addition, she manages the Under-represented Faculty Recruitment Program and the Under-represented Faculty Mentoring Program, whose goals are to recruit and retain a faculty that mirrors the diversity of the UIC student body.

Rao's portfolio also includes her efforts as Principal Investigator of the Women in Science and Engineering System Transformation Initiative (WISEST) funded under the aegis of the National Science Foundation Advance program.

Rao broadly defines her research as "understanding the molecular and cellular mechanisms underlying hormonal and neurotransmitter regulation of physiological processes."

Her research in salt and water absorption and secretion is pertinent to a range of tissues, from the intestines to the mammary gland and includes long-standing collaborations with clinical colleagues in the UIC Department of Medicine. Rao's studies are improving understanding of a variety of diseases, including hypertension, cystic fibrosis and infectious diarrheas.

Rao will begin in her new position this summer. She will be based on the Chicago campus.

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The University of Illinois enrolls 70,000 undergraduate and graduate students at campuses in Urbana-Champaign, Chicago and Springfield, and online, and it awards 17,000 degrees annually.

The agenda and items for the May 17 meeting are available on the Board of Trustees Website at <http://www.uillinois.edu/trustees/agendas.html>.

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