



Distinguished professor Mark Rasenick

A career that combines science, teaching with advocacy

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[Jeanne Galatzer-Levy](#)

Mark Rasenick: "See the big picture and look at science in a larger, more inclusive framework."

Photo: Kathryn Marchetti

"It is rare to have someone who combines such energetic and effective advocacy with such strong science."

High praise, but Harvard University provost and former National Institute of Mental Health director [Steven Hyman](#) is not alone in recognizing the work of [Mark Rasenick](#), professor of physiology and biophysics.

Rasenick was named UIC distinguished professor this year in recognition both of his accomplishments as a scientist and educator and the impact his service has on UIC and the international scientific community.

"His strength as a scientist indeed serves as an important platform for his advocacy," Hyman said in a letter of support for Rasenick's award.

"His credibility stems from the fact that he can talk not only about the NIH budget but also about the interaction of G-protein subunits and tubulin with equal authority."

Rasenick's research over the last 25 years has centered on neural signaling. He has studied the interaction of chemicals that transmit information between nerve cells and act as messengers in the brain and nervous system (called neurotransmitters) and the structural components of the cells, the cytoskeleton.

"What we've found is critical in understanding depression and possibly other psychiatric disorders," Rasenick said.

His research has shown that the changes in the cell brought about by depression include diminished capabilities to interact with neurotransmitters.

"Understanding these changes may lead to novel ways to treat depression in the coming years."

Rasenick was a Robert Wood Johnson Foundation health policy fellow, working as a member of Sen. [Edward M. Kennedy](#)'s staff in 1999-2000.

"Mark's commitment, knowledge and intellectual abilities made a major contribution to the

work in our office," Kennedy wrote in support of Rasenick's nomination for the award.

During his fellowship, Rasenick worked on bills to establish a national transplantation policy and set parity for mental health coverage.

"Working in Washington was an opportunity to step back and see the big picture and look at science in a larger, more inclusive framework," Rasenick said.

"As science has become increasingly accountable to the public, we need to understand biomedical research in the broader context of public health goals."

Rasenick has also worked to strengthen science research in developing countries.

He founded the [Interamerican Consortium on Basic and Clinical Neuroscience](#) to foster cooperation in neuroscience between Latin American and the U.S. — a group that has met in Havana, the Dominican Republic, Buenos Aires and Chile.

As a member of the international affairs committee of the Society for Neuroscience/National Academy of Sciences, he organized a delegation to Hanoi to develop an infrastructure for neuroscience research.

One of the founders of UIC's neuroscience program, he has served as director of the biomedical neuroscience training program since 1998.

He and [Simon Alford](#), professor of biological sciences, formed a partnership with their departments to make the program fully degree-granting.

Rasenick is actively involved in teaching graduate and professional students and resident physicians. He received two [Philip Hawley](#) awards for graduate teaching and a nomination for the medical students' Golden Apple award.