



## Researcher, vice provost new VP for academic affairs

05/30/07

[Mike Lillich](#)

**Mrinalini Rao brings “impeccable academic and administrative credentials,” says university President B. Joseph White.**

*Photo: Roberta Dupuis-Devlin*

---

Mrinalini “Meena” Rao, vice provost for faculty affairs who has been active in promoting women’s leadership in academic research, was named university vice president for academic affairs.

Rao’s appointment was approved by the U of I Board of Trustees at its meeting in Chicago May 17.

Rao, a faculty member since 1984, is also a professor of physiology and biophysics in the College of Medicine.

“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.”

As vice president for academic affairs, she will report to the president and work closely with the chancellors, provosts, the university senates conferences and the faculty senates at the three campuses.

Rao, who will be based on the Chicago campus, begins her new position this summer.

She 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 will chair key universitywide committees and serve on the University Policy Council with the other vice presidents, chancellors and university officers.

“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.

Rao, who was [UIC Woman of the Year](#) in 2004, is principal investigator of the [Women in Science and Engineering System Transformation Initiative \(WISEST\)](#) funded by the National Science Foundation Advance program.

She is a 2000 winner of the [Award for Excellence in Teaching](#) and a [University Scholar](#).

Her research in salt and water absorption and secretion is pertinent to a range of tissues, from the intestines to the mammary gland.

Her studies are aimed at improving the understanding of diseases such as hypertension, cystic fibrosis and infectious diarrheas.