

Granholm names Rao to board

By IAN PATRICK GRAY
Sun Staff Writer

Central Michigan University's growing focus on research and technology has paid off with recognition from the governor and a stronger voice in Lansing.

Gov. Jennifer Granholm appointed CMU President Michael Rao to the powerful new Strategic Economic Investment and Commercialization Board.

The SEIC is part of Granholm's \$2 billion 21st Century Jobs Initiative, which she recently signed into law.

"I think President Rao's appointment to this board is very important for Central Michigan University. It certainly puts us in a new and different league in the 15 public universities in the state," said Kathy Wilbur, CMU vice president for government relations. "I think it was Governor Granholm's recognition of some of the niche research that we are involved in at CMU, in dendrimers and



**MICHAEL
RAO**

(See Rao, Page 2A)

Rao

(Continued from Page 1A)

some other areas."

Rao is one of 18 members of the board, which includes business, education and research leaders from around the state.

The board will be responsible for awarding money for projects that, it is hoped, will diversify the state economy and bring high-tech, cutting-edge research and the high-paying jobs associated with that industry to Michigan. During the 2005-06 state fiscal year, the group will award \$400,000 in tobacco settlement money.

"A lot of professors at places like Central Michigan University get overlooked. I think this will give CMU a much fairer shot at the kinds of investment resources that are necessary to make a lot of projects become a reality," Rao said. "We really need to fund the kind of research that will result in commercialization, spin off companies and patents that companies will want to buy."

A new vision statement that emphasizes national prominence and research and creative activity, combined with the Mt. Pleasant SmartZone, the CMU

Research Corp., new high-tech companies incubating in the Center for Applied Research and Technology and a host of high-quality academic programs made CMU's inclusion on the board a natural choice, Rao said.

"The two strengths that we bring are research niches and we are able to graduate undergrads with bachelor degrees who are truly ready for their jobs," Rao said. "Our professors are really good at getting students while they are still in class engaged and into the work world. We aren't teaching them a lot of theory for four years and hoping an employer will take them on."

Research and academic niches that Rao cited as particularly strong at CMU included data mining, molecular research, polymers, genetics, biosciences, journalism, broadcast and cinematic arts, musical theater, geographic information systems, education, fashion merchandising and apparel, neuroscience and psychology, business (particularly supply chain management and logistics), communication disorders and health professions.