Sarah Rajala (Rye-ah-lah) became the 12th dean of the College of Engineering at Iowa State University on April 1, 2013. She also holds the title of James and Katherine Melsa Professor in Engineering.

Rajala had been the dean of the Bagley College of Engineering at Mississippi State University since 2008. During her years of leadership, Rajala raised more than $30 million in private gifts, revised the college’s strategic plan and established a diversity advisory council to improve the success rates of students of color and women.

Previously, Rajala served as department chair of electrical and computer engineering at Mississippi State (2006-08); and associate dean for research and graduate programs (2002-06) and associate dean for academic affairs (1996-2001) in the College of Engineering at North Carolina State University. She had a distinguished career as a professor and center director prior to moving into administrative leadership positions.

Rajala earned her bachelor’s degree in electrical engineering from Michigan Technological University and master’s and Ph.D. degrees from Rice University. She is a fellow of the American Association for the Advancement of Science, American Society for Engineering Education and the Institute of Electrical and Electronic Engineers.

Rajala is an internationally known academic leader and has served on numerous advisory and editorial boards and committees. She chairs the Global Engineering Deans Council and is a former president of the American Society for Engineering Education. She has consistently broken new ground for women in engineering throughout her career and serves as a role model for young women.