



Usha Rao obtained her undergraduate degree in geology from the University of Bombay, India, and Ph.D. in geochemistry from University of Rochester. She was an Environmental Research Council funded post-doctoral fellow at Northwestern University prior to joining Saint Joseph's University as a faculty member in the environmental science program and the department of chemistry.

At Saint Joseph's University, she has taught majors and non-majors in a wide range of environmental science, geology, and chemistry classes. Her research focuses on groundwater resources, radionuclide pollution in the Great Lakes watershed, the achievement of UN sustainable development goals and climate change solutions, and most recently, the bioremediation of dye pollutants. She is a co-editor of an upcoming research collection on environmental sustainability from CRC Press, Taylor and Francis Group, and a coordinating editor for the Springer-Nature journal, *Environmental Geochemistry and Health*. Usha serves as an Approved Expert Reviewer for the UN Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (UN IPCC) and as a Climate Reality Mentor for Vice President Gore's international initiative to combat climate change. Her research at Saint Joseph's University has been supported by grants from the National Science Foundation, the American Chemical Society Petroleum Research Fund, the Lindback Foundation Minority Research Program, the Purdue University PRIME particle accelerator laboratory, and the Saint Joseph's University Board on Faculty Development and Research. Many of her former undergraduate research students have gone on to obtain doctoral degrees and are thriving in STEM careers of their own.

Usha's experiences as a woman in STEM, an immigrant, a person of color, and one whose scholarly work takes place at new interfaces between traditional fields, drive her to act as an agent of structural change to make STEM more welcoming and accessible to all to maximize the human potential to solve urgent global problems through science. She has served on the Public Affairs Committee of the Association for Women Geoscientists, and currently serves as the Founding Director of the Office of Teaching and Learning at Saint Joseph's University, which provides resources and mentoring to hundreds of faculty members each year. She also co-developed the McNulty Scholars Program at Saint Joseph's University, a STEM leadership program designed to support highly qualified undergraduate women and encourage them into successful careers through full and partial scholarships, faculty and peer mentoring, research opportunities, and regular interactions with established women leaders. Since its inception, the program has supported over 80 rising STEM leaders, who have since gone on to obtain doctoral and medical degrees, won major national awards such as the Fulbright and Goldwater scholarships, and/or have used their STEM backgrounds to serve the public good.

Usha is active in promoting STEM literacy and general literacy among young people, and has served as a Board Trustee of the Ardmore Library of the Lower Merion Library System. She is also engaged in fundraising and advocacy to support children with pediatric cancer and other serious illnesses in honor of her daughter Nina.