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Since 1991, he has been a Professor of electrical engineering and an affiliate Professor of computer science at the University of Maryland, College Park. He is also affiliated with the Center for Automation Research (Director) and the Institute for Advanced Computer Studies (Permanent member). Recently, he has been named a Minta Martin Professor of Engineering.

Prior to joining the University of Maryland, he was an Assistant (1981-1986) and Associate Professor (1986-1991) and Director of the Signal and Image Processing Institute (1988-1990) with the University of Southern California, Los Angeles. Over the last 23 years, he has published numerous book chapters, peer-reviewed journal and conference papers. His current research interests are face and gait analysis, 3D modeling from video, automatic target recognition from stationary and moving platforms, surveillance and monitoring, hyper spectral processing, image understanding, and commercial applications of image processing and understanding.

Dr. Chellappa has served as an associate editor of several IEEE TRANSACTIONS. He was the Editor-in-Chief of IEEE TRANSACTIONS ON PATTERN ANALYSIS AND MACHINE INTELLIGENCE during 2001-2004. He served as a member of the IEEE Signal Processing Society Board of Governors during 1996-1999 and as its Vice President of Awards and Membership during 2002-2004. He has received several awards, including NSF Presidential Young Investigator Award, an IBM Faculty Development Award, the 1990 Excellence in Teaching Award from the School of Engineering at USC, the 1992 Best Industry Related Paper Award from the International Association of Pattern Recognition (with Q. Zheng), and the 2000 Technical Achievement Award from the IEEE Signal Processing Society. He was elected as a Distinguished Faculty Research Fellow (1996-1998) and as a Distinguished Scholar-Teacher (2003) at the University of Maryland. He is a Fellow of IEEE and the International Association for Pattern Recognition. He has served as a General and Technical Program Chair for several IEEE international and national conferences and workshops. He is a Golden Core Member of IEEE Computer Society.