



The College of Polymer Science and Polymer Engineering is proud to recognize all of our successful and exceptional alumni who are doing exciting things both personally and professionally. Do you know who our next alumni spotlight should feature? Email us at cpspe-alumni@uakron.edu.

Sedat Gunes, *Product Development Manager at 3M*, discusses his path since graduating from the college and how the Department of Polymer Engineering has contributed to his success.

How has the College of Polymer Science and Polymer Engineering (CPSPE) influenced your career choice?

My graduate studies at CPSPE played perhaps the single most important role in my career choice. Indeed, Professor Sadhan Jana was first to suggest that 3M would be a good fit for me. I was a junior graduate student when I received that advice and at that time I knew 3M only as a company which made Post-It notes. When I started to explore, I was greatly surprised to find out that 3M had more than 55,000 products ranging from Scotch Brite consumer products to NASA space shuttle parts! Later, the world class polymer engineering and science education that I received at CPSPE gave me the credibility and the necessary skills in pursuing a career in R&D to address challenging technical problems and to improve lives.



How has CPSPE prepared you for your career?

I received three distinct, but inter-related benefits from my education at CPSPE which prepared me for my career. First and perhaps most obviously, I received a world-class polymer engineering and science education at CPSPE that I use every single day in my work. This strong education provided me the necessary professional skills and knowledge to tackle technical challenges in diverse fields ranging from off-shore oil & gas exploration to consumer products. The second and equally important benefit that I received was learning about the importance of collaboration and teamwork. I experienced this first at CPSPE during my graduate research and greatly benefited from it. The third benefit was extensive mentoring and coaching that I received not only from Professor Jana and from other CPSPE Professors, but also from other fellow graduate students. For instance, almost everything that I know about chemical characterization I learned from three other, very well-trained and very patient fellow CPSPE graduate students, Guillermo Jimenez, who is now a Professor at National University of Costa Rica, Jason Randall, who was the former Director of Operations at CPSPE, and Baris Yalcin, who is now an R&D leader at The Coca Cola Company. I have been doing my best to pass the same mentoring and coaching benefits that I received to younger team members that I work with.

What has your journey been like since graduating from CPSPE?

I accepted a position with 3M Corporate Research Laboratories (CRL) in St. Paul, MN right after I received my PhD in Polymer Engineering in late 2009 under the supervision of Professor Jana. In my role with 3M CRL, I led diverse technology development teams in collaboration with some of the world's largest companies in their respective industries, such as consumer electronics, consumer packaged goods, automotive, and off-shore oil & gas exploration. After a few years with 3M CRL, I was assigned to 3M's largest business, 3M Industrial, to lead a corporate initiative on commercialization of next generation liners for new-to-the-world compressed natural gas (CNG) tank products for automotive and heavy duty truck applications. In late 2013, I accepted a different assignment, this time with 3M Consumer Business. In my initial role, I led a Brazil-Canada-US international team which was tasked with development of next generation Scotch-Brite consumer cleaning products. In my current role, I lead all new-to-the-world product development and R&D projects within 3M Scotch-Brite Consumer Products Business.

What is your career path now?

One of the best parts of my current role has been the fulfillment of knowing that Scotch Brite products improve people's lives around the world every day. The hand-written letters that I receive from people who use and love our products are humbling. An exciting and indispensable part of my role has also been collaborating with some of the most accomplished and respected 3M scientists to address some of the most challenging issues around the world. The opportunity to connect with and coach bright, young scientists and engineers around the globe is also something that

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I really enjoy. One of the members of my team, Cari – and, yes, a recent University of Akron graduate – has an office next door. Another member of my team, Deborah, is in Sao Paolo, Brazil. Their passion and drive for collaboration, developing new technologies, and improving lives have been inspirational for me, regardless whether we are in the same conference room or nearly 6,000 miles away.

Is there anything else you would like to share about yourself or your family?

I live in Minneapolis with my wife, Esra, who runs a business consulting firm and my 3-year old daughter, Lillia, who loves anything colorful. I still feel very much connected to CPSPE and Akron and in addition, I am a dedicated Cleveland Cavs and LeBron James fan. My favorite quote is of LeBron: 'Just a Kid from Akron.'

