So many of our students go on to have fascinating and impactful careers. One of them is Dr. Baris Yalcin, an alumnus who was part of the team that facilitated the opening of the National Polymer Innovation Center. Today, Yalcin works in the Global Packaging R&D group for the Coca Cola Company. Recently he told CPSPE all about his experience at the college and how he hopes to make a difference in his new career.

How has the College of Polymer Science and Polymer Engineering (CPSPE) influenced your career choice?
I really enjoyed my graduate school years at CPSPE. I was very pleased with the knowledge and hands-on experience I gained through various courses, research, and thesis work with Prof. Miko Cakmak in the Polymer Engineering Department. I knew right away that I wanted to remain in the field after my graduation. During our studies, we also had the opportunity to observe alumni from different companies, national research centers, and other universities. The Polymer Engineering Department would invite their alumni to give presentations during the “Polymer Engineering Seminar” class about their organizations, products, and projects that they work on. Seeing the breadth and diversity of technical projects from these presentations made me aware that I could fit in so many different industries with my polymer engineering education and secure an interesting career. Indeed, my experience to date has proven me right.

How has CPSPE prepared you for your career?
There is no doubt that the world-class faculty and infrastructure available at CPSPE provided us with the hard skills that are the foundational polymer knowledge and the experience needed to take on difficult technical problems in our everyday work life. However, more important to emphasize are the soft skills that the advisor faculty developed in us during our research work. Throughout our research work, our research advisors taught us how to be efficient analytical thinkers and critical problem solvers while at the same time being thorough in our research projects. Additionally, most research projects were multidisciplinary with other groups in the college or even outside of CPSPE, which gave us the experience of working with different teams complementing each other. When I started my first job outside of CPSPE, I felt very comfortable with almost all of the challenges that were presented to me. I am sure many of my alumni colleagues would agree with me.

What has your journey been like since graduating from CPSPE?
After graduating from the Polymer Engineering Department, I continued to work with Prof. Miko Cakmak, who gave me the opportunity to work as a manager at the Center for Multifunctional Polymer Nanomaterials and Devices (CMPND), a center at CPSPE funded by the Third Frontier Initiative of the State of Ohio. We developed and implemented several next-generation novel roll to roll platform technologies and worked on several interesting projects with various State of Ohio companies/institutions that collaborated with the center, such as the Cleveland Clinic, Lockheed Martin, NASA, and Kent Displays. These initiatives led to the foundation of today’s National Polymer Innovation Center. This experience was priceless for me because it felt like working in 10 companies at the same time, learning different applications. After about 5 years, in 2010, I started working for 3M in the Advanced Materials Division in St Paul MN as a Global Product and Application Development Specialist for hollow microspheres for plastics and rubber, paints and coatings and for insulation, and buoyancy in oil and gas markets. I travelled around the world teaching our customers how to use our microspheres in their applications and even published a book on the topic with my 3M colleagues. Since 2015 I have been working for the Coca Cola Company in Atlanta, GA in the Global Packaging R&D group.
developing Next Generation Barrier Technologies for Packaging and technology transfer to our Bottling Partners.

**What is your career path now?**
It gives me great fulfillment to contribute to different types of packages that millions of people hold in their hands while they enjoy our beverages. However, refreshing the world comes at the expense of creating millions of packages that should be responsibly recycled. In my next assignment, I will take great pride in implementing our Global packaging vision of “A World Without Waste” where we will lead the industry for more sustainable packaging and litter-free world. The opportunity to collaborate with the industry and local authorities on this endeavor will probably be one of the most significant projects that I take on. I am currently working as a Senior Engineer at the Coca Cola Company and as far as long term career plans, I would like to keep learning every day and enjoy the work that I do.

**Is there anything else you would like to share about yourself or your family?**
I currently live in Roswell, GA with my wife Carolina and daughters Isabela (13) and Nicole (11). Living in the south is a new experience for us, so we enjoy the warm weather and take frequent road trips to the beaches.