The College of Polymer Science and Polymer Engineering is proud of the intellectually rich experiential learning environment our faculty provide. Tell us about a faculty member that you want to see in the spotlight by emailing us at cpspe-alumni@uakron.edu.

**Dr. Sadhan Jana** is the Department Chair and a professor in the Department of Polymer Engineering who has been twice awarded as the “Mentor of the Year.” He has been a part of UA for nearly 20 years, and now you can get to know Dr. Jana in his interview for the CPSPE E-News below.

**Tell us something about yourself:**
I was born in a village about 50 miles west of Kolkata, India, where I received my education up to 10th grade. This is where I met an excellent mathematics teacher, Mr. S.N. Maity, who still serves as my role model in academics. He instilled in me very early on that I should become a teacher. What type of teacher I should become changed several times over the years, but he pressed firm in my mind that I should pursue a teaching profession at some point. I received all my degrees in chemical engineering, had post-doctoral research experience in suspension rheology, and even had four years of industrial research experience at GE Corporate Research Center (now GE Global Research) in preparation of my academic career here at The University of Akron.

**What were the driving factors in your decision to join the CPSPE faculty?**
I visited several universities for interviews in the 1997-98 time frame and identified that CPSPE presented the best fit for what I wanted to do. First, the faculty quality was superb, covering all aspects of polymer engineering and polymer science research. Second, the shared-use facilities were beyond my expectations. I was quite impressed with the array of processing equipment that we had at the time and felt that I would not miss any that I had access to in my job at GE Corporate Research. Third, the core and elective course offerings in DPE and DPS presented an ideal mix for training my students. Most other universities that I visited had a couple of polymer electives. The only qualm that I had was the fact that my department last hired an assistant professor more than 10 years ago and, therefore, the faculty probably had forgotten that tenure-track assistant professors needed active mentoring to be successful. This concern was alleviated by Dean Frank Kelley and two of my colleagues in DPE and I decided to join in July of 1998.

**What’s your teaching philosophy or your outlook on higher education?**
I am cognizant that student learners are deductive, inductive, and in between. Therefore, I try to cater some elements of knowledge to all student types by devising a scheme that is interactive. I frequently use white board for derivations, use view graphs, and at times pause and tell stories about the topic that I am covering. Students, irrespective of the learner type, learn and retain information when basic concepts are related to practical applications.

My outlook on higher education: I saw a gradual change of student preparedness in last 15 years. The population of deductive learners is on the wane, while the inductive learners are now resorting to a quick and easy way out approach by adopting a style which is not conducive to learning – they rely more on internet-based contents, which at times are wrong, than reading a textbook. This cannot go on for too long, as graduate students should have a good mix of deductive and inductive learning strategies to tackle research problems. We can make up so much with active advising! This is something that we all should watch out for in coming years.

**What are some of your favorite things to do when you’re not teaching?**
I love nature photography and go out for shooting when I have time. One of my other favorite pastimes is gardening. After a long day’s work, caring for the plants in the garden rejuvenates my mind. At times, this activity also presents an opportunity to sort through some of the difficulties that the students are going through in their research. Another activity I enjoy is listening to classical music with a favorite drink in hand, especially on a Friday evening.

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What do you love most about your job at The University of Akron, and your work through your particular department?
Of all the functions that I perform now, I place classroom teaching as my first love, mentoring graduate students as the close second, and administration as the distant last. As one of my mentors said, you look through the eyes of the students. I love when my students bring to my attention a new material or share a new phenomenon that has not been seen before by others. I love when my graduate students come and tell me that the conceptual discussions that we had earlier have some merit and that they now have a proof of concept. This is how new ideas are born and keep us going. My administrative duties take a lot of time away, but this is a responsibility that one cannot avoid, as the fate of the graduate program is closely tied to it. I would not say that I love it, but having good colleagues and efficient staff members make it more enjoyable.

What are your goals for CPSPE and your department? How do you plan to achieve those goals?
My department took a heavy toll due to faculty departure and retirement in last 3 years, with the faculty strength reduced from 16 in 2011 to 10 as of Fall 2017; a new assistant professor will join in January 2018. My primary goal is to bring back the faculty strength to somewhere around 15 or so in next few years. We have an open search in the area of advanced manufacturing. I am working with Dean Amis to initiate a faculty search in the area of engineering with coatings. Our College needs to fill several vacant positions that directly impact our research capabilities. Dean Amis is working very hard to allocate resources around those positions. Hopefully, our tomorrow will be better.

What is one thing that you hope each of your students learned from you?
I hope my students remember why I keep repeating the following advice: “Do not give up. For every problem there is a solution. We just have to find it.”