Dr. Yu Zhu is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Polymer Science, and has been a member of our faculty since 2012. He has studied in Germany and in the United States, and has achieved numerous publications as well as four patents. We recently had the pleasure of speaking with Dr. Zhu about his career at The University of Akron’s College of Polymer Science and Polymer Engineering. You can read about his life and career below.

Tell us something about yourself:
I completed my undergraduate education in Chemical Engineering in China, my graduate education in Physical Chemistry in Germany, and my postdoctoral training in nanoscience in the USA. My research experience and backgrounds in diverse fields drive me to think and solve problems through interdisciplinary approaches. And my exposure to different cultures helps me to enjoy interacting with people from different cultural backgrounds.

What were the driving factors in your decision to join the CPSPE faculty?
Akron is a big name for people working in the polymer field. To me, years ago when I was looking for the place to start my own research group, CPSPE represented a group of well-known experts covering a wide range of polymer related aspects, access to diverse equipment and facilities, and well-trained, premium students. Considering my background as well as my view of future polymer research, I decided to join the CPSPE faculty.

What’s your teaching philosophy or your outlook on higher education?
I like the Chinese proverb, “Give a person a fish is not as beneficial as to teach a person how to fish.” It is critical for the students to develop the ability to think creatively. Through the courses I teach, and the research projects conducted in my lab, I always encourage students to think critically and become problem solvers.

What are some of your favorite things to do when you’re not teaching?
In my spare time I like to spend time with my family: my wife, son, and daughter. There are so many natural beauties around the Akron area. Without the need to travel too far, we enjoy exploring many local parks. Hiking, biking and fishing are activities we all like.

What do you love most about your job at The University of Akron, and your work through your particular department?
Interacting with my colleagues, who have enormous knowledge covering all aspects of polymer and soft materials, is very inspiring. I enjoy working with them.

What are your goals for CPSPE and your department? How do you plan to achieve those goals?
CPSPE provides a good platform to for me to build up my research on conjugated polymers and related devices. My long-term goal is to explore the soft matter-based electronics and anything related to energy. I will continue to contribute my expertise to this college.

What is one thing that you hope each of your students learned from you?
Self-motivation and persistence.