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. Matthew Becker is the W. Gerald Austen Endowed Chair of Polymer Science and Polymer Engineering and has been a member of our faculty since 2009. In 2015, Professor Becker was one of two scientists worldwide under 40 named Macromolecules-Biomacromolecules Young Investigators. In 2018, he was inducted by the American Institute for Medical and Biological Engineering (AIMBE) into its College of Fellows, and he was awarded the Carl S. Marvel Creative Polymer Chemistry Award by the American Chemical Society. We recently had the pleasure of speaking with Dr. Becker about his career at The University of Akron’s College of Polymer Science and Polymer Engineering. Read more about his life and career below.

Tell us something about yourself:
I went to college as an English major. I was hoping to do journalism or maybe go to medical school. Turns out, my honors composition professor told me that I was not a great poet and that I wrote like a scientist. I soon switched to chemistry.

What were the driving factors in your decision to join the CPSPE faculty?
While I was working at NIST, Alexi Sokolov did a sabbatical in the Polymers Division and spoke highly of the department. Also, several students matriculated through NIST as postdoctoral fellows and were impressive in their efforts and training. The University of Akron also had a really good reputation for working with industry and facilitating technology transfer out of the lab.

What’s your teaching philosophy or your outlook on higher education?
I try really hard to engage the students in discussion and make the assignments and feedback matter. I also try to correlate their learning outcomes to the primary scientific literature and contemporary topics. High level instruction that does not differentiate itself from lectures that can be watched on Youtube, does not have a promising outlook. For the students, the real value is in the discussion and the feedback.

What are some of your favorite things to do when you’re not teaching?
I have three kids who each have multiple activities that I enjoy attending and I also have three start up companies. These keep me more than busy.

What do you love most about your job at The University of Akron, and your work through your particular department?
I really appreciate the efforts of my students. I have a really multi-disciplinary team and students from nine different countries. Together, we are trying to do things that have not been done before.

What are your goals for CPSPE and your department?
I would like CPSPE to stay relevant nationally and internationally and highly research focused. It will be highly dependent on what decisions the university makes over the next two years.

What is one thing that you hope each of your students learned from you?
While I don’t teach this directly, I hope they learn that great effort can overcome ability, that integrity matters and how to effectively deal with adversity. I also hope they learn that the future is what you make of it. I challenge them to build the future they want and that the more they put into their research and studies, the more they will get out of it.