



The University of Akron
**College of Polymer Science
and Polymer Engineering**

STUDENT SPOTLIGHT

Tell us about a talented student you want to see in the spotlight by emailing us at cpspe-alumni@uakron.edu.

Abdala Bashir is currently studying to earn his doctorate in Polymer Science under Dr. Coleen Pugh. Read more about Abdala and his academic journey in CPSPE.

How does your major fit into your life's plan?

My life's plan is to contribute in the efforts of addressing climate change related issues, especially where I hail from, East Africa. I chose chemistry as a major because of the endless possibilities it provides to tackle such issues. After doing several research projects, I decided to go to graduate school to get my training to contribute to research in the field.

What have you learned that makes a difference to you?

I have learned the importance of thinking outside the box. Sometimes I realize that I have been confining my self into a small box looking for a solution for a particular problem. After sometime, I come to the conclusion (in the strangest places and times) that the solution wasn't that far all along.

Why did you choose The University of Akron, specifically the College of Polymer Science and Polymer Engineering?

During my undergraduate years, I took a class on Polymer Chemistry and the Environment, which opened my eyes to the importance of polymers. I was amazed by polymers and what they're capable of. Then, I came to the college as an undergraduate REU intern and worked on functionalization of poly(lactic acid) in Dr. Pugh's group. I gained a great deal of experience and knowledge during the internship. It was a no brainer after that to come back as a graduate student.

Tell us about your experience in an internship or research project.

This fall, I participated in the NSF funded I-Corps program run by UA's Research Foundation. This program helps students explore commercialization of their technology. Throughout the past several weeks, I conducted many interviews with potential customers in various industries. I gained a lot of experience in networking and learned what it means to be an entrepreneur. With the I-Corp program, my interest in entrepreneurship has solidified.

Who is your favorite professor (or staff person) and why?

Paula Watt is somebody that I definitely hold a lot of respect for. During the I-Corps program this fall, Paula Watt was my mentor and I couldn't have asked for a better one. She helped me connect with many people and continues to help with my project.

What are your plans after graduation?

I want to start working as an R&D scientist at a company that values sustainability. I want to take part in their research for more environmentally-friendly materials for various applications. In the distant future, I'd like to go back to East Africa and take part in the sustainable development of the region. Third world countries have the opportunity to develop sustainably and learn from the lessons of the first world countries. This would definitely help reduce effect of recurring droughts that sometimes lead to famine.

