**Tzu-Yu Lai** is currently studying to earn her doctorate in Polymer Engineering under Dr. Kevin Cavicchi. Read more about Tzu-Yu and her academic journey in CPSPE.

**How does your major fit into your life’s plan?**
When I was a chemical engineering undergraduate student seeking a summer research project, I found polymer materials very intriguing because of their versatile properties which are widely used in the real world—from the rubber band around lettuce to the o-ring in the space shuttle. I knew how plastics have drastically changed our lifestyle from the past, and that's why in my future career I want to keep researching them to continue elevating our quality of life.

**What have you learned that makes a difference to you?**
I have learned how to survive well in a foreign country as an international student. I've enjoyed trying new things and have stepped out of my comfort zone to challenge myself. Worries and depressions are inevitable, however, nothing is a better cure than having a group of good friends with different backgrounds who support you. Also, the sense of achievement gained when your effort and hard work turn out (especially when you have finished a phone call to customer service without them asking you to repeat any sentence or word).

**Why did you choose The University of Akron, specifically the College of Polymer Science and Polymer Engineering?**
The University of Akron is globally well-known for the polymer program and many professors in Taiwan are alumni from this college. Because of their fame and my eagerness to become an excellent alumna like them, I chose to join this big family.

**Tell us about your experience in an internship or research project.**
The first project I worked on with Dr. Cavicchi was about low molecular weight organogelators. This fundamental research helped me to discover numerous journal archives created by scientists from the 1970’s and 1980’s. I was astounded by the detailed research they have done, even with limited access to instruments of characterization which are common now. Last summer at the ACS conference poster competition, I received a compliment from a judge who said that our organogelator study was comprehensive and a complete story. I felt encouraged and hope the desire to do excellent research will endure in my career.

**Who is your favorite professor (or staff person) and why?**
It’s hard for me to pick between Sarah Thorley and Deb Wilhite. Both of them are very helpful and nice to me. They are very responsible and always provide the best support at a moments notice. I especially thank Sarah for giving me the Amish country pamphlets (I told her once that I hadn't been there before), and I thank Deb for sharing the tip to see the orchid blossoms again.

**What are your plans after graduation?**
I want to work in industry and devote myself to a research and development position in order to apply the knowledge I have learned in CPSPE to improving the quality of our daily lives.