Michael Wilson is currently studying to earn his doctorate in Polymer Science under Dr. Ali Dhinojwala. Read more about Michael and his academic journey in CPSPE.

How does your major fit into your life’s plan?
When I was in high school, I had the opportunity to intern at Oak Ridge National Lab, and that experience sparked my interest in research. I had a fairly clear plan when I entered my undergraduate program that I wanted to go for a Ph.D. During my undergraduate studies in materials science, I was drawn to the field of polymers, particularly from the experiences with professors I had along the way.

What have you learned that makes a difference to you?
I have been given the opportunity to mentor a number of undergraduate and graduate students over my time in the program, which has helped me hone the skills necessary to provide leadership. Mentoring requires practice, and many people develop differing styles of mentoring. I have learned a lot about mentoring both from my own advisor’s (Ali Dhinojwala) mentorship of me and fellow groupmates and from my own practice along the way. It has been enjoyable to have had the opportunity to collaborate with so many people.

Why did you choose The University of Akron, specifically the College of Polymer Science and Polymer Engineering?
I chose The University of Akron because of its reputation in the field of polymers. I knew that I wanted to attend a program with a focus on polymeric materials. My criteria for picking a program was finding a place where there were a number of professors doing work that I would like to do. To narrow down my choices from there, I spoke with some of my undergraduate professors who focused on polymeric materials, and they recommended The University of Akron.

Tell us about your experience in an internship or research project.
I have had the wonderful opportunity to work as a biomimicry fellow during my graduate work. My fellowship involves working alongside Lubrizol to solve industrial challenges using nature as inspiration. When I came to graduate school, I did not expect to have been so connected with the study of biological systems, but collaboration with people in the Integrated Bioscience program has helped me learn a diversity of new topics. Additionally, the support and guidance I have received from numerous employees at Lubrizol has really made my time enjoyable.

Who is your favorite professor (or staff person) and why?
It is probably not fair to put down your advisor, so I’ll say besides Ali, my favorite staff person would be Ed Laughlin. I really appreciate the care he puts into his work. He is always fun to talk with, and provides a great amount of wisdom and skill to the designs and crazy ideas that I have come up with. He considers the goal of whatever project I need and the practicality of my design. Items he has made have made my projects successful.

What are your plans after graduation?
My plan is to go work at a post-doctoral position before looking for jobs at universities. I plan to go on to work in an academic setting, where I can continue to do research while teaching. Teachers have significantly influenced my career path and outlook on the world, and I hope to pay it forward to future generations of students.