Xuesi Yao is currently studying to earn his doctorate in Polymer Science under Dr. Steven Chuang. Read more about Xuesi and his academic journey in CPSPE.

How does your major fit into your life’s plan?
I dreamed to be a scientist when I was a child. Fortunately, I got an opportunity to experience a research project about developing materials for a sports company during my undergraduate study. This experience opened the door for me to explore the application of polymer science in people’s life. I decided to pursue a Ph.D. degree to harvest the knowledge and skills for my future innovative research work.

What have you learned that makes a difference to you?
I believe the capability to keep curiosity in my research work is the most important characteristic that I cultured throughout these years. It is very common to experience failures and confusions in research works. My curiosity in research projects is a strong driving force to keep me patient and excited when I am facing those scientific issues.

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 globally recognized reputation in the field of polymers. The College of Polymer Science and Polymer Engineering has exchange programs with many top universities in China. I talked with some of my undergraduate professors and classmates who have visited The University of Akron. They strongly recommended this place to me, which helped me to make my decision to pursue a Ph.D. degree here.

Tell us about your experience in an internship or research project.
I would like to share my experience in a project funded by the Ohio Coal Development Office. I was a junior Ph.D. student when I was handed over this independent project with a $300,000 budget. I did not expect that, apart from chemistry and formulation, I needed to perform countless engineering works, which included reactor design, gas flow control, and temperature control. This industrial project broadened my vision to think outside the box.

Who is your favorite professor (or staff person) and why?
My advisor, Prof. Steven Chuang, is definitely my favorite professor. He is one of the most energetic professors that I have ever met. He enjoys exploring science and technology from very basic theories to the commercialized products. I’m grateful for his guidance not only in the academic area, but also the attitude toward our research works. He often mentions that honesty and optimism play a huge role in our research journey.

What are your plans after graduation?
I want to begin my career as a R&D scientist in a commercial company. I would like to see my intelligence and innovation contributing to better products that serve people’s daily lives.