Dr. Xiong Gong is a Professor in the Department of Polymer Engineering, and has been a member of our faculty since 2010. He has studied in China and in the United States, and has achieved numerous publications, citations, honors and awards. We recently had the pleasure of speaking with Dr. Gong about his career at The University of Akron’s College of Polymer Science and Polymer Engineering. You can read about his life and career below.

Tell us something about yourself:
I received my B.Sc. and M.Sc. in Chemistry and Ph.D. in Physics in China, and my postdoctoral training in Materials Science and Engineering with Professor Alan J. Heeger, Nobel Prize laureate, in the USA. I joined The University of Akron in 2010 after I worked in a high-technology industrial company focused on flexible electronics for 8 years. My research experience and backgrounds in diverse fields drive me to think about fundamental science and to solve technical and engineering problems through interdisciplinary approaches.

What were the driving factors in your decision to join the CPSPE faculty?
Akron has a big name in polymers. Probably 8 years ago, when I was looking for the place to start my own research group, the College of Polymer Science and Polymer Engineering at The University of Akron was represented by a group of well-known experts in the wide range of polymer science and polymer engineering, and the state-of-the-art, diverse equipment and facilities. My research focus is closely related to semiconducting polymers; to join the Polymer College was certainly the right decision.

What’s your teaching philosophy or your outlook on higher education?
I always believe that a professor is a teacher, a scholar, and a public servant. I also believe that it is very important to guide students in an interactive way and teach them how to handle scientific problems independently and creatively rather than to teach students by unilaterally supplying them with information and knowledge, particularly, instead of presenting the subject as a series of formulas and rules that nature obeys.

What are some of your favorite things to do when you’re not teaching?
In my spare time I like to spend time with my wife hiking in the sunny afternoon, my son playing tennis, or as a family biking together in the Cuyahoga Valley, in particular, in the beautiful fall season.

What do you love most about your job at The University of Akron, and your work through your particular department?
Discussion with each of my graduate students every Friday from early morning to late afternoon is the greatest day as a professor. Interacting with my colleagues who have enormous knowledge covering all aspects of polymer and soft materials is very inspiring. I love working with them.

What are your goals for CPSPE and your department?
My long-term goal in CPSPE is to explore cost-effective flexible image sensors and self-powered wearable electronics.

What is one thing that you hope each of your students learned from you?
Good attitude, self-motivation, work hard and persistence.