Kevin Endres is a current graduate student pursuing his Ph.D. degree in Polymer Science. Prior to attending The University of Akron, he studied chemistry at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign. Kevin shares his story on why he chose The University of Akron, and what his experiences are as a graduate student in the Department of Polymer Science.

**How does your major (or minor) fit into your life’s plan?**

Chemistry, like all other sciences, provides us with a better understanding of how matter behaves. Chemistry provides ideas of explanation for laws of nature and realism, which are investigated using specific theories, concepts, methods and experimental tools. I became a chemist to apply this to my life, and to provide tangible change to society. During my time in high school, AP chemistry was regarded as the toughest class. It was certainly the most challenging class I had to take at the time, but I was excited by the challenge. I chose to spend the next four years following high school at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign studying chemistry. My experiences inside and outside of the classroom with world-renowned professors, my student colleagues, and my friends, enlightened me to the true potential that a career in chemistry offered. It was then that I had to make the decision of whether I should get a job or advance my education, and the decision was simple. How could I pass up the opportunity to refine my chemistry knowledge, and truly become an expert within my field? Although graduate school is difficult, we must put in work to make progress. Polymer science was the most logical choice I could have made for my career path. The fact that I could not look in any direction without seeing a polymer in some shape or form set off at least a dozen light bulbs in my mind. Many of the most important molecules in biological systems, textiles, coatings, food and more are made from polymers. Despite its importance today and potential for future economic growth, I was shocked by how few Polymer Science programs there are in universities nationally and internationally. My Google search for Polymer Science programs lead me straight to The University of Akron. True understanding of polymers relies on their characterization, and so Professor Chrys Wesdemiotis’ research laboratory was the most exciting and logical choice for my career.

**What have you learned (or are learning) that makes a difference to you?**

I am fortunate to be involved with the research in the Wesdemiotis Group because of the close relationships we have fostered with industrial partners, collaborators in polymer science and engineering, chemistry, chemical engineering, biology and more. We are an interdisciplinary group, working with diverse and challenging problems with an even more diverse collection of researchers. Being able to learn about the chemistries and the people that we work with is the most rewarding and prolific source of knowledge that I could ever dream of. I learn from our collaborators who are experts in their field, and this is an opportunity that I have highly coveted. I would encourage everyone to take every opportunity to take interest in what other people do or are interested in because that information may overlap with your goals or may even create new ones.

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

I chose The University of Akron because it is the premier university for polymer innovation. The College of Polymer Science and Polymer Engineering consists of some of the most remarkable research scientists in the world. The faculty and graduate students represented the most influential selling point at the prospective student weekend. My fellow prospective students and I were treated with kindness and respect, and their attitudes represented the infectious pride they feel for Akron.

**What are your plans after graduation?**

My plans for after graduation include starting a family and my career in industry. I plan on traveling to various countries in Europe, China, Japan, and Australia to name a few examples.
Who is your favorite professor (or staff person) and why?
My favorite professor is my advisor Chrys Wesdemiotis because of his guidance, patience and care for everyone and myself. I am also very grateful for all of the friendships I developed with the Polymer Science and Engineering faculty.

Anything else you would like to share?
Enrolling in graduate school at The University of Akron in the College of Polymer Science has been the most rewarding experience of my life. My problem solving abilities, open mindedness, research skills and knowledge of chemistry has improved greatly. I would like to urge anyone who is on the fence about going to graduate school to apply. Whether you are in a science related field of study or not, the hard work will pay off.