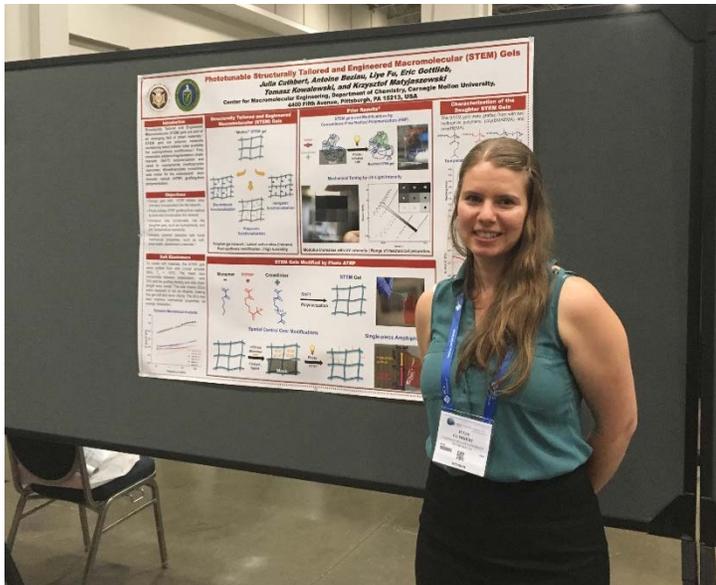


I attended my first ACS national conference in Washington, D.C. and presented a poster on my research accomplishments in polymer chemistry. More specifically, work on the controlled radical polymerization (CRP) technique atom transfer radical polymerization (ATRP) with my advisor, Krzysztof Matyjaszewski. My project is Structurally Tailored and Engineered Macromolecular (STEM) gels, which are part of an emerging field of smart materials. STEM gels are polymer networks containing latent initiator sites available for post-synthesis modification and introduction of new functionalities.



The entire conference was an enriching experience. I presented at the Sci-Mix and the CRP symposium poster sessions. The Sci-Mix session was an excellent opportunity to network with members from other ACS divisions and be exposed to research beyond polymer chemistry. In addition to the poster sessions, I attended as many talks as possible to broaden my knowledge. At the CRP symposium, I was impressed by Brent Sumerlin's elegant one pot synthesis method for block copolymers. It involved a three-layer liquid system with the top and bottom layers containing monomer separated by a middle frozen layer. Besides the CRP talks, I also attended lecture series on polymer networks, soft materials, and 3D printing. Jeremiah Johnson, for instance, gave a talk of particular interest to me on "controlling polymer network topology with chemistry." This talk was divided into two sections. The first was on his group's recent work on "living additive manufacturing" of polymer gels. The second focused on strategies on control and minimize structural defects in polymer networks.

One of my favorite talks was given by Filip Du Prez on sequence-defined polymers, which have been referred to as the "holy grail" of synthetic chemistry. Du Prez focused his discussion on their potential future applications in data storage. Not only is important to develop method of making such precise polymers, but we also need a way to "read" the sequence. To this end, Du Prez presented his first efforts to design a "chemreader." Using MALDI MS data, the program can directly convert the sequence into a code. In this scenario, the monomers can act as a letters and the oligomers are words.

Finally, this fall's ACS conference took place during the solar eclipse. ACS was kind enough to supply us with the safe eclipse glasses. Everyone was very excited for the high point of the eclipse, and took a short break for the talks to go outside and observe it together. It was a unique and fun experience.

ACS Washington, D.C. gave me an opportunity to put faces to the names of scientists whose work I follow and who I admire. I have also been inspired to take some new directions in my own research endeavors. I am very grateful to ACS Pittsburgh for their generosity in helping me attend this meeting.