Attending the American Chemical Society national conference in San Diego provided an opportunity to practice my presentation skills, meet leaders in my field and learn about their research, reconnect with existing colleagues, and recruit for my graduate program at Carnegie Mellon University.

The experience I will cherish most about this conference was presenting my own work in the Polymeric Materials: Science and Engineering Division. Standing up and explaining my research in front of a crowd of respected and inspiring leaders in my field was an incredible experience. I especially enjoyed answering questions at the end of my talk – this not only gave me a chance to dive deeper into data that I didn’t have time to show in the talk, but it also gave me ideas for new experiments to try and aspects of my project I had not thought about before.

I listened to many talks while at ACS and heard about current, even some unpublished, research that some of my favorite labs around the country are involved in. Further, I learned about many groups that I had never heard of, making me eager to read more about their work and keep their future publications on my radar. Learning about other people’s research inspired me in my own research and gave me ideas for projects moving forward.

Many of my colleagues, both fellow students and professors, from my undergraduate institution, California Polytechnic State University, attended the conference. Seeing them at this conference gave me a chance to hear about the new research they are involved in and maintain these cross-country connections.

Finally, while at this conference, I hosted a booth at the Graduate School recruiting fair. This event provided a platform for me to interact with undergraduate students from around the country and world who have interest in going to graduate school. By connecting with these students and giving them information about the chemistry graduate program at CMU, I hope to cultivate interest in our department which will create a pipeline of talented young researchers coming through CMU.

Overall, I am incredibly thankful for the Pittsburgh section of the ACS for playing a role in sending me to the ACS national conference. This conference was an unforgettable experience and an amazing opportunity for growth in my graduate studies and career.