

## 2023 POLY Election Statements and Bios

An email will be sent to voting members containing login instructions

Watch for an email from VOTENOW on October 17th

If you do not receive an email send an email to [KATHYL@VT.EDU](mailto:KATHYL@VT.EDU)

Keep your contact information up-to-date! Send updates to [SERVICE@ACS.ORG](mailto:SERVICE@ACS.ORG).

### Vice Chair Candidates



Kevin Cavicchi  
Univ. of Akron



Derek Patton  
Univ. of S. Mississippi



Abraham Joy  
Univ. of Akron



John Matson  
Virginia Tech

### Treasurer Candidates

### Councilor Candidates



Wei Gao  
Dow Chemical Co.



Kathryn Uhrich  
UC Riverside

### Alternate Councilor Candidates



Toby Nelson  
Oklahoma State Univ.



Colleen Scott  
Mississippi State Univ.

**ELECTIONS GO LIVE 10/17-11/16**

Go online to <https://polyacs.org/elections/>  
to see election history, officer duties, and other election information.



## Candidates for Vice Chair



**Kevin Cavicchi**  
University of Akron

Statement: I am honored to be nominated as a candidate for Vice-Chair for the Division of Polymer Chemistry. I believe that the core strength of the division is the dedication of its members earned from the excellent programming for, outreach to, and promotion of its members.

This is complemented by the division's willingness to continually innovate and adjust its practices to stay current in meeting its members' needs. I believe that my service to the division as Chair of the Graduate Student Chapters from 2011-2015, Membership Chair from 2013-2015 and Member-at-Large from 2016-2019 shows my enthusiasm for serving the division and has given me the experience needed to continue to the tradition of solid leadership that has placed POLY at the forefront of the Polymer Science community. The pandemic accelerated hybrid and online engagement with POLY members that provides new opportunities to benefit members at meetings and short-courses. I believe we should continue to explore, develop and hone these opportunities to maintain, update and expand the well-crafted member services and benefits the POLY Division is known for. I am excited about the opportunity to serve as Vice-Chair and take on a greater leadership role in the division.

Biography: Kevin Cavicchi is a Professor of Polymer Engineering in the School of Polymer Science and Polymer Engineering at the University of Akron. He grew up in Reading, MA and received a B.S. in Materials Science and Engineering (MSE) in 1998 from Cornell University and a Ph.D. in MSE from the University of Minnesota in 2003. After a post-doctoral fellowship in the Department of Polymer Science and Engineering at the University of Massachusetts-Amherst he joined the Department of Polymer Engineering at the University of Akron in January 2006. His research group is broadly interested in nanostructured soft materials. This includes the synthesis and characterization of ionomers, shape memory polymer and actuators and small molecule organogelators. As former Associate Dean of Academic Affairs he spearheaded the development and implementation of two new Master degree programs, and an undergraduate minor in Polymer Science and Polymer Engineering, which has now expanded into an undergraduate degree. In addition to his service with POLY he has served on the executive committees and boards for the Division of Polymer Materials Science and Engineering, the Akron Chapter of the Society of Plastics Engineers, the Intersociety Polymer Education Council, and the Cleveland Ultimate Disc Association.



**Derek Patton**  
University of  
Southern Mississippi

Statement: Stepping up for the role of Vice Chair of the POLY Division is an exciting challenge, and I am honored for the nomination and opportunity to serve. Like many graduate students, I was invited to join a POLY board meeting early in my career – an opportunity

that provided insights into the POLY mission, the benefits of membership, and the rewards of active engagement. The power of a simple invite – POLY has now been my professional home for more than 23 years. Having served as Treasurer for the division, Faculty Advisor for the POLY/PMSE Student Chapter at Southern Miss, and as a symposium organizer, I have enjoyed being engaged in fostering a professional community committed to advancing polymer science.

My tenure as Vice Chair would align to drive the three key areas identified within the 2023 POLY Strategic Plan: engaging our diverse membership, enriching our educational/career development resources, and enhancing communication strategies. As a professor, supporting the development of the “now/next” generation of polymer scientists specifically resonates with me. Thus, I am particularly interested in initiatives (e.g., mentorship and exposure to diverse career paths, networking, scientific storytelling) that directly facilitate the career advancement of both students and early-career polymer science professionals – groups whose development is crucial for the long-term vitality of our field. It is also within these early career groups that we have opportunities to enhance diversity and grow the division's efforts in inclusivity. As Vice Chair, I also look forward to connecting all POLY members to high-quality technical programming via engagement with the POLY Program Council. I have the energy and experience to serve POLY as Vice Chair. I invite your support as we work together to elevate the POLY division's impact on its membership and on the broader scientific community.

Biography: Derek Patton is the Director of the School of Polymer Science and Engineering at the University of Southern Mississippi. After earning a B.S. in Chemistry from Jacksonville State University, he pursued an M.S. at the University of Alabama at Birmingham and a Ph.D. at the University of Houston, mentored by Dr. Rigoberto Advinula. In 2006, he extended his expertise as an NRC Postdoctoral Fellow at NIST working alongside Dr. Kathryn Beers in the Polymers Division. In 2008, he joined USM's faculty, where he has received several honors including the NSF CAREER Award, Graduate School Mentor of the Year, and POLY Fellow. Derek's research team has contributed over 80 peer-reviewed publications and has secured one U.S. patent.



## Candidates for Treasurer



### Abraham Joy University of Akron

Statement: It is an honor to be nominated for Treasurer of the Division of Polymer Chemistry (POLY). Since my graduate school days, ACS has been the home for my professional development. ACS POLY brings together scientists from a broad background to address the current and future aspects of polymer science

and polymer engineering. I have been an active member of POLY for a decade, benefiting from its diversity, and helping to widen the impact of our science and increasing the pool of active POLY members by organizing symposia and participating in organizational meetings. Working with the excellent POLY staff, I will work to ensure that POLY is fiscally sound, while enabling creative ways to expand membership and programming to increase the reach and significance of POLY. I will work to increase representation from industry and academia in a manner that strengthens the fiscal position of POLY.

Biography: Abraham Joy is a professor of Polymer Science and Polymer Engineering at the University of Akron. Abraham obtained a PhD in physical organic chemistry from Tulane University. Following two postdoctoral stints at Georgia Tech and Rutgers University, he was appointed as an assistant professor at the University of Akron in 2010 and has since been promoted through the ranks to full professor.

From 2021-23 he served as an NSF program manager in the Division of Materials Research co-managing the BMAT program.



### John Matson Virginia Tech

Statement: I thank the POLY Division leadership team for the nomination for the position of Treasurer. Before I agreed to accept this nomination, I spent significant time learning about this position, with the goal of understanding the current financial state of the division and ensuring that I could bring positive change

if elected. I spoke in depth with the current Treasurer, past treasurers, and current POLY Executive Committee members to get a feel for the challenges in distributing limited resources to best serve the wide-ranging interests of POLY members. I chose to run because I have learned how to manage budgets over the past 11 years leading my independent laboratory and in the past year as Associate Department Chair. In all cases, there is never enough money to fund every initiative or important project, and hard choices always have to be made. I will work with other members of the POLY Executive Committee to bring POLY to a strong financial position through careful attention to budget and spending data, coordinated consideration of funding priorities, and identification of new potential funding streams. I will also rely on my experience in the International Union of Pure and Applied Chemistry (IUPAC), where I have worked as a titular member of the Polymer Division to generate consensus on issues affecting the international community of polymer chemists.

Biography: Professor Matson is a Professor of Chemistry and the Dr. AC Lilly, Jr. Faculty Fellow in Nanoscience at Virginia Tech. He also currently serves as the Associate Chair of the Department of Chemistry. He received his undergraduate degree majoring in Chemistry and German at Washington University in St. Louis, performing undergraduate research with Prof. Karen Wooley. He then moved to Caltech to pursue a PhD with Professor Bob Grubbs. He graduated in 2009 and moved to Northwestern University, where he worked as a postdoctoral with Professor Sam Stupp. He began his independent career at Virginia Tech in 2012. His research focuses on macromolecular and supramolecular chemistry with applications in biology, medicine, and sustainability.

In terms of external service, Professor Matson has organized symposia for POLY several times, but this is his first time running for an elected position. Most of his external service to date has been for IUPAC, where he has been a member of the Subcommittee for Polymer Terminology since 2017 and a Titular Member of the Polymer Division since 2020.



## Candidates for Councilor



**Wei Gao**  
Dow Chemical  
Company

Statement: I am honored to be nominated as a candidate for Councilor for POLY division. I feel so lucky to connect with many enthusiastic POLY members like you from around the world. My engagement with POLY and ACS has been growing with my career over

the past 20+ years. I have been a long time POLY number, organized 12 POLY symposia at National Meetings since 2014, served as an Alternate Councilor since 2021, and initiated Natural Polymers Consortium roundtable with ACS Green Chemistry Institute in 2023. Being an Alternate Councilor for POLY, I have participated in POLY Executive Committee for POLY's routine activities and joined the 2023 strategic planning for POLY. I also had opportunities to attend multiple ACS Councilor meetings to act as a POLY Councilor since 2021 under my Alternate Councilor role. Through engagement in POLY's Industry Advisory Board and International Activity Committee, I believe in the great need and value of developing talents beyond education and promoting strong collaborations among academy, government labs and industry within and beyond POLY globally with other ACS divisions, ACS local sections, and other professional societies to tackle the grand challenge of sustainability, which I am very passionate about and aligns well with POLY and ACS's mission. I would appreciate your support and be thrilled to serve as a Counselor for POLY and bringing value to all members.

Biography: Wei Gao is a Fellow at Dow. She received her B.S. from Fudan University and Ph.D. from Peking University in 1997. She then worked as a postdoctoral fellow and an Associate Professor in the Institute of Chemistry, Chinese Academy of Sciences. Employment at Polytechnic University (Now NYU Tandon School of Engineering) followed in 2000, and in 2005 she became a Research Assistant Professor. Wei joined Rohm and Haas/Dow 2006. She intensively works on polymer and particle characterization, synthesis-structure-property relationship of polymeric and colloidal systems, and sustainable polymers development. Wei has published 40+ peer-reviewed journal articles and book chapters, 25+ patents and patent applications, and co-edited 2 books. Besides six Dow internal significant technical awards, Wei had been recognized externally with US EPA Presidential Green Chemistry Challenge Awards (2003 and 2013), Industrial Chemistry Award from ACS Philadelphia local section (2021), ACS POLY fellow (2021), Business Intelligence Group (BIG) Innovation (2022) and Sustainability (2020 and 2022) awards, and R&D 100 award (2022). Wei also actively serves as an ACS career consultant for talent development.



**Kathryn Uhrich**  
University of  
California, Riverside

Statement: It's been an honor to represent POLY as a Councilor over the past few years. My goals as councilor has been to advance chemistry by focusing on inclusive excellence and rethinking meeting platforms, leveraging what we learned in the global pandemic.

Regarding inclusive excellence within POLY, we can increase the diversity of meeting organizers and invited speakers – as well as our award winners. In my newest role as a member of ACS' Nominations & Elections Committee, I've gained insight as to how future ACS leaders are chosen and now striving to diversify the candidate slates. Regarding meetings, as the POLY representative for the ACS Meetings & Exhibitions Committee, we've been evaluating and debating new platforms to deliver national and regional meetings. While progress is slow when working with multiple groups in multiple venues, the increased transparency and engagement is critical for the future of ACS meetings. When considering equity and inclusion, we must do even more and hold ourselves accountable. As an active researcher, educator, entrepreneur and administrator, I will continue to focus on inclusive excellence and assist POLY recognizing everyone's contributions.

Biography: Dr. Kathryn Uhrich is currently a Distinguished Professor of Chemistry at University of California, Riverside. Dr. Uhrich's research links chemistry with the life sciences and engineering to create new materials and design new devices in which polymers can be used to increase health and wellness. Widely recognized as a leading innovator in polymer research, her research focuses on designing bioactive, biodegradable polymers that are also biocompatible. Dr. Uhrich has been issued more than 80 U.S. and international patents, and her work has spawned several start-up companies. Dr. Uhrich's innovative research in polymer chemistry and biomaterials has trained nearly 200 scientists. She is a Fellow of POLY, ACS, American Association for the Advancement of Science, and National Academy of Inventors.

Service in ACS (selected): Member ACS since 1990. Member, Award Committee for Encouraging Women into Careers in the Chemical Sciences, 2002-05; Member, Canvassing and Selection Committee, ACS National Award Selection Committee, 2014-17, 2017-20; Chair and Member, Canvassing and Selection Committee, Kathryn C Hach Award for Entrepreneurial Success, 2013-2016, 2020-2023; Committee Chair, Operations of Meetings & Exhibitions, 2020-23; Member, Nominations & Elections Committee, 2023-present. POLY Division: Symposia organizer for regional and national ACS meeting, 2000-present; Workshop Co-organizer, "Polymers in Medicine and Biology", POLY 2005-15; National Programming Chair, 2006-08; Councilor and Executive Committee Member, 2017-present.



## Candidates for Alternate Councilor



### **Toby Nelson** **Oklahoma State** **University**

Statement: I am honored to be nominated as a candidate for the Alternate Councilor of the ACS Division of Polymer Chemistry. I have served a three-term as the Alternate Councilor from 2016-2018 for POLY and I have served on the POLY Awards Committee for five years. I

have been an ACS member for 21 years and a member of the Polymer Division for 15 years. I have witnessed the hard work and dedication of the past and present leadership. Being able to serve the division in this capacity will provide the opportunity for more involvement in POLY and strengthen my relationship with the current members. I will be honored to serve our division in this position with hard work and dedication if elected. I appreciate your support in this election.

Biography: Toby L. Nelson is a Research Associate Professor of Clean Manufacturing and Advanced Materials at the University of Tennessee-Oak Ridge Innovation Institute. He was an Associate Professor in the Department of Chemistry and Director of Student Engagement and STEM Initiatives in the College of Arts and Sciences at Oklahoma State University. He holds a B.S. in Chemistry from Francis Marion University and Ph.D. in Organic Chemistry from University of South Carolina. Dr. Nelson was also a UNCF-Merck Postdoctoral Fellow in organic materials at Carnegie Mellon University under advisement of Professor Richard D. McCullough. His current research focuses on the design and synthesis of organic materials via green methods such as green solvent usage, C-H functionalization and solvent free techniques like high-speed ball-milled polymerization reactions.



### **Colleen Scott** **Mississippi State** **University**

Statement: It is my honor to be nominated for the position of Alternative Counselor for the ACS POLY division. My time as a POLY member and a part of the POLY membership team has really helped me connect with many members of the POLY Division, who have all

been very supportive throughout my career. Consequently, it would be my honor to support the team of POLY Counselors, should they call on me, and to help in any way to continue advancing the science, technology, and diversity of POLY. I am also a strong supporter of providing meaningful programs and outreach to our members.

Biography: Colleen Scott is an Associate Professor of Chemistry at Mississippi State University. She obtained her B.S. in Chemistry from Auburn University and her Ph.D. in Chemistry from the University of Pittsburgh. She joined the Department of Chemistry and Biochemistry at Southern Illinois University, Carbondale in 2006 as a Postdoctoral fellow, then joined the faculty in 2010. In 2015, she moved to Mississippi State University to continue her work, where she currently resides. Her research focuses on organic and polymeric materials; specifically, materials for degradable alternative thermoplastics, semiconducting polymers for organic optoelectronic devices, and near infrared dyes for chemo- and biosensors. She is an awardee of the prestigious National Science Foundation (NSF) Young Faculty CAREER award, the College of Arts and Science Research award, and the TechConnect 2022 Innovation award for the development of Near-Infrared II Dyes for Biological Imaging and Optoelectronic Devices.