

# Society of Plastics Engineers - UConn

## Polymer Seminar

Friday, April 4, 11:15 pm

Science 1, room 1002



## John Toribio

Chemistry Ph.D. Candidate

Sotzing Group - IMS

### The Duality of Getting a PhD and Building a Startup

**Abstract:** Navigating the rigorous world of polymer science while spearheading a tech startup has been a transformative journey. I am a PhD candidate in Chemistry in the Sotzing Research Group at UConn and simultaneously serve as Co-Founder and CEO/CTO of Zemi, a startup focused on developing a wearable health tracking system that leverages smart clothing integrated with biopotential electrodes. In this talk, I will outline how I've balanced my graduate research and studies with the challenges of building a startup, sharing strategies for effective time management, resource allocation, and maintaining scientific rigor amid commercial pressures.

My entrepreneurial path has been marked by several significant milestones, including joining UConn TIP, securing dedicated lab space, and accolades such as the Innovation Quest and Innovate Health Pitchfest awards in 2024. Through pitch competitions like these, as well as entrepreneurial programs like CCEI's Summer Fellowship, NSF I-Corps, and VentureWell's E-Team Program, we have successfully raised \$65,000 - further underscoring the promise of our venture. This seminar will offer an honest narrative of the trials and triumphs experienced while bridging academia and entrepreneurship, providing valuable lessons for polymer researchers considering similar interdisciplinary pursuits.

**Bio:** John M. Toribio is a PhD candidate in Polymer Chemistry at UConn, as well as Co-Founder and CEO/CTO of Zemi Labs Inc. He holds a Bachelor of Science with double majors in Physics and ACS-Certified Chemistry from Iona College. Born and raised in the Bronx, NY to a Dominican family, John is a first-gen US Citizen, college graduate, and scientist.