Tell us about your organization and its role in the advanced bioeconomy.

DSM combines life sciences and materials sciences disciplines, technologies and talents in a unique way to create innovative and sustainable solutions that address the key challenges facing society today. We’re committed to creating products and solutions that make a positive difference in people’s lives today and for generations to come. Our Bio-based Products & Services organization draws upon the company’s unique position in biotechnology, materials sciences and chemistry to pioneer advances in renewable energies and renewable chemical building blocks like bio-based succinic acid.

Tell us about your role and what you are focused on in the next 12 months.

I’m responsible for DSM’s Bio-based Products & Services group in the U.S., where I focus on managing our external relationships. This means speaking and attending industry conferences, working with regulators and lawmakers on a national basis and interacting with customers, partners and investors at a high level. Over the next 12 months, I’ll be working with current and future business partners as we develop new growth platforms and commercialize existing ones in the bio-based chemicals and fuels arena.

What do you feel are the most important milestones the industry must achieve in the next 5 years?

Stable legislation that supports all biofuels without hurting existing grain ethanol producers is key. In early September, DSM, through our POET-DSM Advanced Biofuels joint venture, and together with a handful of other companies vested in advanced biofuels, sent a letter to President Obama that highlights the role that the RFS plays in encouraging investment in our industry. It read in part: “The RFS gives the advanced biofuel industry an opportunity to break into a motor fuel supply chain dominated by oil interests. The long-range policy certainty created by the RFS – together with your administration’s commitment to the industry – made it possible for our companies to invest billions of dollars to commercialize our technologies and build the most innovative refineries in the world.”

If you could snap your fingers and change one thing about the Advanced Bioeconomy, what would you change?

It would be nice to have policy decisions better synchronized with technology development. It takes five to ten years to develop advanced technologies like the ones with which we’re working in the biofuels industry, yet policies typically have a half-life of two years. Without consistency of policy, it’s difficult for big companies to make significant investments.

Of all the reasons that influenced you to join the Advanced Bioeconomy industry, what single reason stands out for you as still being compelling and important to you?

As a society, we need to think about the sustainability of everything that we do – and we have a large gap between the way we treat our energy today and the needs of the rest of the world. The developing nations of the world who aspire to have a standard of living like the one we have are driving this massive energy requirement. Their societal advances, which also will add about two billion people to our global population over the next three decades, means there’s going to be much more pressure on energy production, and much more pressure on our food supply.
What really attracts me to this field is the forward view of the macro challenges that we have as a world society. If we’re the people, we’re the company, we’re the group, we’re the association, we’re the industry that can make a positive change and find solutions to these issues, I think people will look back in 50 to 100 years from now at our industry and say, “Wow! It’s a damn good thing we followed this path and made these changes!”

Where are you from?
I was born in Connecticut and raised outside of Philadelphia, PA. I now live with my family in Maryland.

What was your undergraduate major in college, and where did you attend? Why did you choose that school and that pathway?
I’ve always enjoyed sciences and as my high school career progressed, I won a chemistry scholarship of $250 (which I promptly spent on a stereo). This made me think that if I was good enough to win an award, then maybe I should be an engineer. The University of Delaware was one of the best schools in the northeast in chemical engineering, so I earned my Bachelor of Science in Chemical Engineering from there. I later earned my MBA from Loyola University.

Who do you consider your mentors. What have you learned from them?
I would have to say my father, because he did it the hard way. My father’s only path to college and a better life was by going to Korea with the Air Force. When he got out of the service, he attended college on the G.I. Bill, worked two jobs, and helped raise three kids. He eventually wound up a successful entrepreneur. I was fortunate to inherit his work ethic, though I have had it significantly easier than he did.

What hobbies do you pursue, away from your work in the industry?
I will confess to being a reformed gearhead, who from my teenage years worked on the family cars, taking care of maintenance and repairs. I still enjoy cars, and I have two that consume some of my time during warmer, drier months.

I enjoy tennis and golf on a regular basis. Woodworking also has been very rewarding for me, as I find making reproduction furniture very fulfilling. When I’m not in the garage, hitting the links or on the road, I also make time among my hobbies to stay active in my church.

What 3 books would you take to read, if stranded on a desert island?
The most important would be a survivalists guide that included a large, illustrated section on edible plants in tropical climes. Because I’m a history buff, I’d also include an anthology of modern history. Finally, to complement my woodworking skills, I’d choose a guide to sailboat design and construction!

What books or articles are on your reading list right now, or you just completed and really enjoyed?
I’ve recently read a book called The Forever War, a non-fiction by New York Times war correspondent Dexter Filkins about the war in Afghanistan. It was extremely gritty, vivid and hard to put down.

What’s your favorite city or place to visit, for a holiday?
Hands down, I’d choose Vail, Colorado, accompanied by my family. We’re all avid skiers and enjoy the mountains and the fresh air.