Invention Group
You are a Pioneer in Medical Applications of Plastics

Your Background and Biography
Helping other people has always been the most important source of fulfillment and meaning in your life. Growing up, you volunteered to help animals at the ASPCA and patients at your local hospital. But you have always been an inventor too. You enjoy taking things apart to see how they work and then figuring out how to improve them. The drive to make things better has inspired you all your life.

You studied mechanical engineering and biology at Lafayette College before completing a master’s degree and a Ph.D. at the University of Pennsylvania. While at Penn, you and several other students proposed a new polymer-based material to be used in cerebral shunts to decrease the size of the catheter attached to the pump that drains fluid from the brain.

With a grant funded by the National Science Foundation, you and your colleagues started your own company in your parents’ basement. Fifteen years later your company is one of the top two medically based application companies in the United States, posting an annual $5 billion in profits. You and your partners are still involved in product research and development, and you have been honored by organizations for your leadership in the field. You remain committed to giving back to your community, and your philanthropy is widespread. You contribute generously to causes related to public health, and your company donates millions each year to community-development initiatives and medical research.

Your company uses many plastic-based materials in its products, and it has a long history of safety testing and quality control owing to the U.S. Food and Drug Administration’s restrictions on medical devices. But you’re concerned that the Environmental Protection Agency’s proposed regulatory measures could negatively affect your business. Any regulations would dramatically affect the types of raw materials (your innovative polymer compounds, for example) that are available to your company, limiting the possibilities of innovation and development.

You believe that most plastics are safe and will continue to help doctors improve the health of patients. You have argued many times that without plastics medical care will take a giant step backward, in quality, effectiveness, and cost. Plastics are abundantly useful to the practice of modern medicine. To give just one example, the use of plastics in the medical field has eliminated the need for massive sterilization of things like intravenous bags, tubes, and syringes, which saves time, millions of gallons of water, and large amounts of electricity. You’re concerned with the deleterious effect that these well-meaning but misguided regulations could have on the field of medicine, and you’re determined to make sure people at the hearings know about your concerns.
Your Mission

Your goal at this hearing is to convince the Regulators to include the Invention Group’s recommendations in their final regulation. To make this argument effectively, you must

- Complete the assigned readings listed at the bottom of this page;
- Work closely with the other members of your group to develop clear answers to the Regulators’ questions;
- Make use of as much specific information as possible to develop strong arguments that the many societal benefits of plastics outweigh the problems and that too much regulation may stifle innovation;
- Read as much as you can about your position and the positions of the other groups; and
- Complete written reflections on your character, interest group, and readings as assigned.

Your Victory Objectives

- **You will receive 10 points** if the Regulators select your group’s proposal as the final regulation.
- The Regulators will rank the interest groups by how well their goals are represented in the final regulation. You will receive between 1 and 5 points based on how the Invention Group is ranked and how well the regulation reflects your goals.

Sources

Invention Group Sources

- Case Study: The Benefits of Plastic Innovation
- “Interview with Bob Kenworthy,” video, vimeo.com/channels/465871

Your Individual Sources

- Select **one article** from the bibliography on *The Case of Plastics* website recommended for the Invention Group. Read the article and write two paragraphs summarizing the article and how it will be useful to you in the upcoming debate.