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Samuel is Board of Trustees Professor of Materials Science and Engineering, Chemistry, Medicine, and Biomedical Engineering at Northwestern University. He also directs Northwestern's Simpson Querrey Institute for BioNanotechnology and the Center for Bio-Inspired Energy Science, an Energy Frontiers Research Center funded by the U.S. Department of Energy.

Samuel's interdisciplinary research is focused on developing self-assembling supramolecular nanostructures and materials for functions relevant to renewable energy, regenerative medicine, and robotic soft matter. He is a member of the National Academy of Sciences, the National Academy of Engineering, the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, the Royal Spanish Academy, and the National Academy of Inventors. His awards include the Department of Energy Prize for Outstanding Achievement in Materials Chemistry, the Materials Research Society Medal Award, the International Award from The Society of Polymer Science in Japan, the Royal Society Award in Soft Matter and Biophysical Chemistry, and three national awards from the American Chemical Society: the ACS Award in Polymer Chemistry, the Ronald Breslow Award for Achievement in Biomimetic Chemistry, and the Ralph F. Hirschmann Award in Peptide Chemistry.