

TEXAS STUDENT FALSIFIED DATA

SCIENTIFIC MISCONDUCT:
Student's actions put multiple research papers in doubt

AN INVESTIGATION INTO chemistry research at the University of Texas, Austin, has concluded that scientific misconduct occurred. The finding casts doubt on several research papers in the field of polymer mechanochemistry, where chemists use mechanical force rather than light or heat to make and break bonds.

Questions about research from Christopher W. Bielawski's lab at UT Austin were raised earlier this year when the journal *Science* published an editorial expression of concern over a high-profile 2011 paper from his group (DOI: 10.1126/science.1207934; C&EN, June 30, page 7).

In recent weeks, two more editorial expressions of concern about research from Bielawski's group have appeared in the journals *Polymer Chemistry* (DOI: 10.1039/c4py90087a) and *Chemical Science* (DOI: 10.1039/c4sc90048k).

Officials at UT Austin tell C&EN that their investigation into the matter has concluded: "One author of several papers in question told UT officials that he or she—acting alone—had falsified and otherwise misrepresented data or figures in the papers, which led to the finding of scientific misconduct."

University officials say federal privacy laws prohibit them from divulging any further information, such as the identity of the student. Aside from Bielawski, however, the common coauthor on all three papers is Kelly M. Wiggins, a former graduate student in Bielawski's group. Neither Bielawski nor Wig-

gins has so far replied to C&EN's requests for comment.

The finding of scientific misconduct also calls into question other papers published by Wiggins and Bielawski, including a 2011 paper in the *Journal of Polymer Science Part A: Polymer Chemistry*, a 2012 paper published in *Angewandte Chemie*, and several papers that appeared in the *Journal of the American Chemical Society (JACS)* over the course of multiple years.

Glenn S. Ruskin, director of the American Chemical Society's Office of Public Affairs, tells C&EN that UT Austin has been in touch regarding the *JACS* papers. "In light of these communications, we are presently working with relevant parties to determine an appropriate course of action in response," he says. ACS also publishes C&EN.

The research was funded by the Army Research Office and the Welch Foundation. Both organizations say they rely on universities to investigate matters of misconduct.

Bielawski is no longer on the faculty at UT Austin. He's moved to Ulsan National Institute of Science & Technology, in South Korea.

Wiggins joined the Beckman Institute at the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign, as a postdoctoral fellow in 2013. Officials there say she left the institute for personal reasons.—

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Chemical
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www.rsc.org/chemicalscience

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Wiggins, Jonathan P. Moerdyk and

The Royal Society of Chemistry has been contacted by the corresponding author of the article regarding concerns of scientific misconduct. The University of Texas at Austin has informed us that an investigation to ascertain the validity of the data reported in the article. We have contacted the

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