



# Backbone rearrangement of polyesters and polyurethanes

**A novel method to modify polyester and polyurethane backbones to change material properties and introduce a handle for degradation.**

**IP Status:** US Patent Pending; Application number US20240409685A1

## Applications

- Alter polymer structure and properties
- Introduce a handle for selective degradation

## Key Benefits & Differentiators

- **Broadly applicable:** backbones of both polyesters and polyurethanes can be rearranged
- **Access novel structures:** new repeat units, not available via classical polymerization strategies, can be synthesized

## Technology Overview

Post-polymerization modifications allow for the fine-tuning and customization of polymer properties to meet specific application requirements. However, the development of post-polymerization modification techniques has largely focused on polymer side chains and end groups, not on the polymer backbone despite the plethora of possibilities it offers. Although methods currently exist to edit polymer backbones, these techniques are highly backbone-specific, which in turn limits their applications.

Researchers at the University of Minnesota have developed a novel method to modify the polymer backbone of both polyesters and polyurethanes. By using a transition metal catalyst, pendant alkenes can undergo a rearrangement and be moved to the polymer backbone. This offers the potential for modification of polymer properties, access to novel repeat units, and introduces a handle for new degradation pathways. The introduction of an alkene into the backbone allows for facile depolymerization via ethenolysis. Rearrangement and subsequent ethenolysis have been successfully demonstrated on the lab scale. This pathway is of value to selectively depolymerize these materials in a mixed plastic waste stream.

## Phase of Development

**TRL: 3-4**

Lab scale proof of concept has been demonstrated.

## Desired Partnerships

This technology is now available for:

- License
- Sponsored research
- Co-development

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**Technology ID**

2023-290

## Category

Engineering & Physical  
Sciences/Chemicals  
Engineering & Physical  
Sciences/Materials

## Learn more



## Researchers

- [Ian Tonks, PhD](#) Associate Department Head, Lloyd H. Reyerson Professor, Department of Chemistry

## References

1. Rachael A. J. Ditzler, Rachel M. Rapagnani, Nathaniel K. Berney, Ross F. Koby, Erin C. Krist, Benjamin J. Kruse, Hilary D. Fokwa, Ian A. Tonks, and Aleksandr V. Zhukhovitskiy(May 22, 2024) , <https://pubs.acs.org/doi/full/10.1021/jacs.4c02917>, <https://pubs.acs.org/journal/jacsat>