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Prof. Mikael P. BacklundUniversity of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, USA

Mikael Backlund earned his B.S. from the University of California, Berkeley in 2010 and his Ph.D. from Stanford University in 2016, where he worked in the lab of W. E. Moerner as a Robert and Marvel Kirby Stanford Graduate Fellow. From 2016 to 2020 he was a postdoctoral fellow at the Harvard-Smithsonian Center for Astrophysics under the advisement of Ron Walsworth. In 2020 he started as an assistant professor in the Department of Chemistry at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, where he is also a member of the Illinois Quantum Information Science and Technology Center (IQUIST), the Center for Biophysics and Quantitative Biology, and the NSF Science and Technology Center for Quantitative Cell Biology. Recent awards and honors include the Spectroscopy Society of Pittsburgh Starter Grant Award, a National Academy of Sciences Kavli Fellowship, the Arnold and Mabel Beckman Young Investigator Award, and the National Science Foundation CAREER Award.