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Drug charges against college professor are dropped

By **Matt Rocheleau** | GLOBE CORRESPONDENT FEBRUARY 22, 2012

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Charges have been dropped against a longtime college professor who was summoned to court three months ago on charges of running a methamphetamine lab out of her Somerville home with her son, authorities said.

Last Thursday, “in the interest of justice,” Irina Kristy, 74, was cleared of the charges - distribution of methamphetamine, conspiracy to violate drug laws, and drug violation in a school zone - that police filed against her in Somerville District Court on Nov. 14, said Cara O’Brien, a spokeswoman for the Middlesex district attorney’s office. Her 30-year-old son has pleaded not guilty to the same three charges.

Kristy's charges were dismissed "following a subsequent investigation" by Somerville police and the district attorney's office, O'Brien said. As the investigation continued, more than two dozen academics spoke up on her behalf.

Kristy had taught mathematics for more than two decades at Boston University and Suffolk University. She was placed on administrative leave last semester from each school following her court summons. She has not returned to work at either since. Each university declined to comment about Kristy's potential future employment.

Her lawyer Robert L. Peabody of the Boston-based law firm Collora LLP said that she is "obviously very pleased that Middlesex District Attorney Gerry Leone did not pursue further the charges against her" and hopes to be reinstated at both colleges.

He declined to comment further about the case because Kristy would not want to compromise ongoing criminal proceedings against her son.

Peabody forwarded a letter sent to prosecutors as part of an effort to convince them she is not guilty.

Signed by 25 local and international academics, the letter details her background as a human rights activist in her native Russia where, the letter says, she was subjected to Soviet persecution eventually forcing her in 1985 to move to the United States.

Soon after immigrating, the letter says, she secured jobs at Suffolk University and BU, despite knowing limited English. In that time, she raised her son, then 3, and cared for her husband who suffered from multiple sclerosis. He died in 1998.

"We all know her as a person of highest moral standards, a champion of law and justice," the letter says. "It is absolutely impossible that such a person would knowingly tolerate, let alone be involved in, a criminal activity, like the manufacturing and sale of narcotic drugs."

Kristy's son, Grigory Genkin, moved into her home several years ago following "a difficult past," the letter says. She was "so relieved to be able to provide a home for her son that she would never have considered

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'It is absolutely impossible that such a person would knowingly tolerate . . . a criminal activity'

Letter signed by 25 academics supporting professor Irina Kristy

invading his privacy or interfering in his life.”

Though they lived together, Kristy’s professional life working two busy teaching jobs kept her away from the house for long periods on workdays, according to the letter. She left her house at 6 a.m. and returned after 10 p.m. most days.

“Her [work-related] distraction . . . absent-mindedness typical of someone of her advanced age, and her naïve respect for the privacy rights of her son all contributed to this unfortunate situation,” the letter said.

Genkin’s criminal case will move to a probable cause hearing next Wednesday, officials said.

He was arrested in November when police said he turned himself in to authorities after local, state, and federal law enforcement investigators recovered evidence that the second-floor residence on Oxford Street - about 500 feet from City Hall and an elementary school - was being used to make methamphetamine, police have said.

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