Sungjin Kim
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Jan 31, 2026

Dear Selection Committee,
NBER Innovation Research Boot Camp 2026

Dear Professor Bryan, Professor Ganguli, and Professor Myers,

I am writing to apply for the NBER Innovation Research Boot Camp 2026 in Cambridge, MA. I am a Ph.D. candidate in Managerial Economics & Strategy at Northwestern University's Kellogg School of Management, with research interests in health economics, IO, and economics of innovation. Specifically, I study how market structure shapes innovation incentives in medicine and technology, and how insurance design, provider consolidation, and public risk-sharing shape the organization of healthcare financing and contracting.

I am particularly excited about the Boot Camp because it provides an on-ramp into the foundational ideas, institutions, evidence, and frontier questions which is often not taught as a dedicated field course. It would be a great opportunity to meet people in the innovation research community and learn from them. I would benefit from the intensive lectures and from attending the boot camp to learn how leading work frames questions and evidence at the policy frontier.

My recommendation letter writer is Professor David Dranove (Kellogg School of Management, Northwestern University). His email address is d-dranove@kellogg.northwestern.edu.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,
Sungjin Kim

SUNGJIN KIM

Email: sungjin.kim@kellogg.northwestern.edu
Website: https://sites.google.com/view/sungjinkim-nu

EDUCATION

Northwestern University
Ph.D. Candidate in Managerial Economics & Strategy — Present
M.S., Managerial Economics & Strategy — 2024

Yonsei University, South Korea
M.A., Economics — 2023
B.A., Economics (Highest Honors) and Applied Statistics — 2021

FIELDS

Health Economics, Industrial Organization, Economics of Innovation

PUBLICATIONS

Political Orientation and Policy Compliance: Evidence from COVID-19 Mobility Patterns in Korea
- with Hee-Seung Yang. *The BE Journal of Economic Analysis & Policy*. 2025

WORKING PAPERS

[1] Innovation or Suppression? Acquisitions and Diffusion of Knowledge in Patents (with Ruofei Guo)

Abstract: Collaboration can accelerate innovation or quietly bury a future rival. We model and estimate incumbents' collaboration decisions, separating development benefits from suppressive intent, and build a support-intent index that predicts whether a deal will launch or kill an innovation. Counterfactuals highlight a trade-off: limiting suppressive deals raises success probabilities but can reduce investment incentives, deterring high-value breakthroughs.

[2] Licensing and Knowledge Spillovers in Pharmaceutical R&D (with Shengmao Cao, Anran Li, and Jingyuan Wang)

Abstract: This paper examines how pharmaceutical in-licensing agreements affect subsequent innovation, with a focus on whether licensing facilitates learning and knowledge spillovers beyond the transferred asset. Using a long panel of firm-level drug development activity, we implement a matched difference-in-differences design to compare firms that enter their first in-licensing deal with carefully matched peers who have indistinguishable pre-deal origination trajectories. We find that licensing experience fosters more drug innovations with a higher success probability.

[3] Merger with Intermediation: The Price Effect of Distant Hospital Mergers (with David Dranove and Benjamin Vatter)

Abstract: Cross-market hospital mergers often raise prices at acquired hospitals, but not for the usual local market-power reasons. Patient overlap with multi-region employers explains some cases, yet many price increases occur without overlap. We find that employer access requirements and contracting frictions may drive these effects, with important implications for antitrust enforcement.

[4] Home Alone: Local Economic Impacts of Single-person Households (with Hee-Seung Yang**)**

Abstract: When population growth slows, local economies can still expand if household formation rises—particularly through growth in single-person households. Using the uneven allocation of government-issued convenience store permits as an instrument for the prevalence of single-person households, the study finds that more single-person households increase employment, firm entry, and wages, with gains concentrated in non-tradable services that replace home production (e.g., food services, laundry/cleaning, personal care, and recreation). Complementary surveys and transaction evidence suggest single adults spend less time on chores, are less satisfied doing them, and rely more on market services and leisure, underscoring household composition as an important driver of local growth.

WORK IN PROGRESS

[1] Price Regulation, Generic Competition, and Drug Supply Shortage (with Shengmao Cao)
[2] Reinsuring the Insurers of Last Resort (With David Dranove, Craig Garthwaite, Chris Ody, and Molly Schnell)

TEACHING EXPERIENCE

Northwestern University, Kellogg School of Management (Graduate Assistant)
Healthcare Strategy — Winter 2025, Winter 2026

Yonsei University (Teaching Assistant)
Industry and Organization Theory — Spring, Fall 2020-2022
Current Issues in Development Economics — Spring, Fall 2021-2023

Yonsei University (Instructor)
Economics Department Summer Math Camp — Summer 2021, Summer 2022

RESEARCH EXPERIENCE

Research Assistant for Dr. Shengmao Cao (Northwestern) — 2024-Present
Research Assistant for Dr. David Dranove (Northwestern) — 2024-2025
Research Assistant for Dr. Cristian Pop-Eleches (Columbia) — 2022
Research Assistant for Dr. Hyuncheol Bryant Kim (HKUST) — 2021-2023

AWARDS, GRANTS & FELLOWSHIPS

Korea Foundation for Advanced Studies Research Fellowship ($65,000) — 2023-2028
Kellogg Graduate Fellowship — 2023-2029
Yonsei Signature Cluster Research Fund — 2021-2023
Korea National Research Foundation Social Sciences Research Grant — 2020-2021

PRESENTATIONS

International Transportation Economics Association (ITEA) Conference — June 2025
European Association for Labour Economists (EALE) Conference — September 2024
Korea Economic Review International Conference — July 2023
Asian and Australasian Society of Labour Economics (AASLE) Conference — December 2022

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Technical Skills: Python, Stata, R, LaTeX, SQL, ArcGIS
Languages: English(fluent), Korean(fluent), French(conversational)
Citizenship: Republic of Korea

List of all current and completed PhD courses

AY 2023-2024 (1st year)

Microeconomics	Fall 2023 (ECON 410-1), Winter 2024 (ECON 410-2), Spring 2024 (ECON 410-3)
Econometrics	Fall 2023 (ECON 480-1), Winter 2024 (ECON 480-2), Spring 2024 (ECON 480-3)
Static Optimization in Economics	Fall 2023 (MECS 560-1)
Dynamic Optimization in Economics	Winter 2024 (MECS 560-2)
Research in Economics	Spring 2024 (MECS 560-3)

AY 2024-2025 (2nd year)

Health Economics	Fall 2024 (MECS 551-1)
Industrial Organization	Fall 2024 (ECON 450-1), Winter 2025 (ECON 450-2), Spring 2025 (ECON 450-3)
Economics of Organizations	Winter 2025 (MECS 570-1), Spring 2025 (MECS 570-2)
Public Finance	Winter 2025 (ECON 436-2)
Labor Economics	Fall 2024 (ECON 440-2), Spring 2025 (ECON 440-1)

AY 2025-2026 (3rd year)

- none -

Application Essay for the NBER Innovation Research Boot Camp 2026

Sungjin Kim

I am Sungjin Kim, a 3rd year PhD Candidate at Northwestern University, Kellogg School of Management. My research draws on health economics, economics of innovation, and IO. Specifically, I study how market forces and policies shape innovation incentives and impact the diffusion of new knowledge.

Current research. In one of my central projects, I study why diffusion is as important as invention but far from automatic. Because control rights over inventions are often consolidated through acquisitions, licensing, and alliances, private incentives may diverge from what maximizes social value. Acquisitions can foster diffusion by enabling integration and complementary investment, but they may also suppress diffusion when the acquired technology overlaps with the acquirer's portfolio and raises cannibalization risk. To test these mechanisms, I model acquisition as competition for control rights and treat post-acquisition suppression as a latent choice shaped by a cannibalization-versus-profit tradeoff, using patent-citation patterns to infer support versus suppression. The results point to a welfare trade-off: stricter antitrust can promote diffusion but may also weaken incentives to invest in innovation.

In parallel, I am recently studying the effect of licensing on pharmaceutical innovation through the lens of knowledge spillovers. The research project asks the question of whether licensing experience changes subsequent innovation in a way consistent with learning and capability building beyond the transferred asset. Results suggest that collaboration between companies not only increases the success probability of their collaborative project itself, but makes both licensor and licensee companies more knowledgeable, more experienced, and more active in future innovations.

Future research. Going forward, I plan to build a cohesive agenda on strategic behavior around intangible assets and the implications for innovation policy. Continuing my current works, I plan to focus on how economic forces such as cannibalization risk, bargaining and contracting frictions, organizational capabilities, and product-market incentives govern collaborations and competitions in innovative markets, and link transaction activity to downstream innovation outcomes such as patenting, product launches, and clinical development. A complementary line of work will examine how policy and market institutions, including antitrust enforcement, IP rules, and R&D support regimes, shift the allocation of innovative effort.

Why I want to attend the Boot Camp. The Boot Camp is an ideal fit for my research trajectory because it is designed as valuable platform into the economics of innovation and innovation policy, pairing intensive instruction with direct engagement in the innovation research community. I'm especially excited to meet and learn from professors whose work closely aligns with my interests, like professors Pierre Azoulay and Kyle Myers whose research taught me deeply on how incentives, organizational frictions, and funding environments affect life-science R&D and the translation of scientific discoveries into drug development. I'm also eager to learn from Professors Heidi Williams and Chad Jones on how policy and institutions influence the direction and pace of innovation, particularly in settings where diffusion, incentives, and welfare trade-offs are central.

February 4, 2026

It is a pleasure to write this letter of recommendation for **Sungjin Kim**, who is applying to the NBER Innovation Research Boot Camp. Simply stated, Sungjin is one of the very best PhD students I have advised in my 40+ year career. You should not hesitate to invite him.

I met Sungjin in my PhD class in health economics. He immediately fit the profile of an outstanding student. Not only did he quickly grasp what was going on in each research paper that we studied, and not only was he facile with complex research methods, he put forth new and challenging questions. That ability to generate new ideas is a hallmark of an excellent scholar. Sungjin soon started making regular visits to my office to discuss research ideas. During one of these meetings, I asked Sungjin to serve as a research assistant on one of my stalled projects about the healthcare safety net. Sungjin took up the challenge and overcame some longstanding obstacles. My coauthors agreed to add Sungjin to the authorship team. The same dynamic played out on a project concerning hospital mergers. And I understand that other faculty have had similar experiences. He is that good.

One of Sungjin's current research papers builds on the well-known paper "Killer Acquisitions" which documents that many pharma companies acquire potentially competing drugs while they are still in the development pipeline...and then "kill" the drugs. Sungjin proposes a structural model in which firms' decisions to invest in R&D depend, in part, on the likelihood that another firm might acquire their invention. This creates a potential positive outcome from killer acquisitions, as they may encourage more early-stage research. In a second paper, Sungjin is studying whether licensors enjoy learning spillovers from their licensed products - gaining broader knowledge that may allow them to more effectively develop other drugs.

Sungjin is engaging, super fast, and will be a delightful addition to the Boot Camp.

Sincerely,

David Dranove