UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA

Carlson School of Management *Department of Strategic Management and Entrepreneurship*

February 9, 2026

Dear Members of the Committee,

I write to submit my application for NBER Innovation Research Boot Camp. I am currently a Ph.D. candidate in the Strategic Management and Entrepreneurship Department at the Carlson School of Management, University of Minnesota, and I plan to defend my dissertation before June 30, 2026. My committee members are Aseem Kaul (Co-advisor), Sandy Yu (Co-Advisor), Russell Funk, Colleen Flaherty Manchester, and Tom VanHeuvelen. After graduation, I will join the Department of Management at the Freeman School of Business, Tulane University, as a postdoctoral fellow, working closely with Matt Higgins. My letter writer is Matt Higgins (mhiggins2@tulane.edu), Department of Management, Freeman School of Business, Tulane University.

My research focuses on entrepreneurship and innovation, with a particular emphasis on understanding which forms of structural interventions, by different stakeholders, are most beneficial to startups, and how these effects vary across firms. Alongside my academic work, I have been actively engaged with the entrepreneurial community and have collaborated closely with the Holmes Entrepreneurship Center in Minnesota to develop enhanced training programs for entrepreneurs. Supporting entrepreneurs is a critical driver of innovation and economic growth, and I believe my research interests closely align with the focus of the boot camp.

Should you have any questions or require any clarifications, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Yeon Jin Kim
Carlson School of Management,
University of Minnesota

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Yeon Jin Kim

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RESEARCH INTERESTS

Entrepreneurship, Innovation, Human Capital, Social Impact
I study entrepreneurship and innovation, with a focus on what form of support, from which stakeholders (i.e., mentors, peers, accelerators), is most beneficial to startups, and how these effects vary across startups (i.e., founder gender, education, and industry).

EDUCATION

University of Minnesota – Twin Cities, Current
Ph.D. in Business Administration, Strategic Management & Entrepreneurship
Committee : Aseem Kaul (Co-advisor), Sandy Yu (Co-advisor), Russell Funk
Colleen Flaherty Manchester, Tom VanHeuvelen.
Dissertation : Gender and Entrepreneurship
- *Supported by Will Mitchell Dissertation Research Award, Strategy Research Foundation*

Seoul National University
M.S. in Business Administration, Organizations and Management Studies

Ewha Woman's University
B.A. in Business Administration.
**Highlighting individuality in women, the official name of Ewha is Ewha Woman's University (for more, link)*

RESEARCH

Working Papers
- Kim, Y. "Founder Gender and Mentor Preference"
  - *Supported by Will Mitchell Dissertation Research Award, Strategy Research Foundation*

- Kim, Y. & Yu. S "When Peer Knowledge Helps or Hurts: Cohort Effects in Accelerators" (Manuscript available)

Work-in-progress
- "Founder experience and Mentor Preference" (Writing)
- "Board of Advisory Wanted: Mentor Team Composition and Startup Performance" (Data analysis)
- "Value in Trade-off in Founders' Mentor Search : Mechanism testing" (Experiment ideation stage)
- "Accelerators and Women Founders" with Sandy Yu (Data analysis)
- "Social Inequality, Resource Accessibility, and R&D Startups" with Haiyue Jiang (Data analysis)
  - *Best Student Poster Award, Finalist, APPAM*
- "Predicting risky investments and collaboration networks" (Pilot experiment data analysis)
  - *Best Paper in Knowledge and Innovation IG, Finalist, SMS*

HONORS

2024	Best Student Poster Award, Finalist, Association of Public Policy Analysis & Management Research Conference
2024	Doctoral Dissertation Fellowship for exceptional dissertation progress, Carlson School, University of Minnesota ($31,000)

2024 – 2025	Grant for DEI Research, Carlson School, University of Minnesota ($2,200, $2,300)
2023 – 2024	Ph.D. Student Travel Fellowship, Carlson School, University of Minnesota
2023	Will Mitchell Dissertation Award, Strategy Research Foundation ($10,000)
2023	Doctoral Workshop Scholarship, SMS Annual Conference
2019	Best Paper in Knowledge and Innovation IG, Finalist, SMS Annual Conference
2017 – 2018	Tuition Scholarship, Seoul National University
2013	Venture Competition, 3rd place Winner, Ewha Woman's University
2012 – 2014	Tuition Scholarship, Ewha Woman's University

PRESENTATIONS & CONFERENCES (* denotes presented by co-author)

Presentations

"Founder Gender and Mentor Preference"
- Academy of Management Annual Meeting Presenter Symposium 2025 (Copenhagen, Denmark)
- Consortium on Competitiveness and Cooperation 2025 HBS (Boston, US)
- Strategic Management Society Annual Conference 2024 (Istanbul, Türkiye)
- Non-market Strategy Research Community Doctoral Conference 2025 (Virtual)
- Strategic Management Society Special Conference 2024 (Washington DC, US)

"When Peer Knowledge Helps or Hurts: Cohort Effects in Accelerators"
- Academy of Management Annual Meeting PDW 2025 (Copenhagen, Denmark)

"Accelerators and women founders"
- Strategic Management Society Annual Conference 2023 (Toronto, Canada)*
- Academy of Management Annual Meeting PDW 2023 (Boston, US)*

"Social inequality, Resource accessibility, R&D startups"
- Association of Public Policy Analysis & Management Conference 2024 (Maryland, US)*

"Predicting risky investments and collaboration networks"
- Strategic Management Society Annual Conference 2019 (Minneapolis, US)

Organized Symposiums

"Reconciling Supply- and Demand-side Explanations Behind Disparities in Early-Stage Entrepreneurship"
- OMT, STR, & ENT Divisions, Academy of Management Annual Meeting 2025 (Copenhagen, Denmark)

Others

XXXVIII Sunbelt Conference (2018), AOM ENT Doctoral Consortium (2023), SMS Doctoral Workshop(2023), Smith Entrepreneurship Research Conference (2023, 2025), Collective Impact Doctoral Workshop (2023), AOM TIM Doctoral Consortium (2024), Non-market Strategy Research Community Doctoral Conference (2023,2024), Great Lake Entrepreneurship Conference 2024 (Chicago, US)

TEACHING

Full-time Instructor

University of Minnesota
- Fundamentals of Management
  Undergraduate course, 64 students, 3 credits
  In charge of designing the course, teaching, grading, etc (Instructor Evaluation Score : 5.75/6)

Guest Lecturer

University of Minnesota

- Business Ethics, Corporate Responsibility & Sustainability, Undergraduate (Russell Funk)
- Ethics and Data Privacy, Graduate course (Russell Funk)

Teaching Assistant

University of Minnesota

- Corporate Strategy, Undergraduate course (Alex Wilson)
- Ethics and Data Privacy, Graduate course (Russell Funk)
- Introduction to Entrepreneurship, Undergraduate course (Sunasir Dutta)
- Business Ethics, Corporate Responsibility & Sustainability, Undergraduate course (Russell Funk)
- Economics, MBA (Jeremy Watson)
- Corporate Strategy, MBA (Aseem Kaul)
- Introduction to Entrepreneurship, Undergraduate course (Sandy Yu)
- International Business, Graduate course (Shaker Zahra)

Seoul National University

- Entrepreneurship, Executive MBA (Jonghoon Bae)
- Change Management, Executive MBA (Jonghoon Bae)
- Organization Theory, Undergraduate course (Jonghoon Bae)

SERVICE

Ad-hoc Reviewer Strategic Entrepreneurship Journal
Ph.D. Student Coordinator Strategic Management and Entrepreneurship, Carlson School (2021-2023)
Member Strategic Management Society (2017-Current), Academy of Management(2016-Current)

EXPERIENCE

Research Assistant

- The Ministry of Education of the Republic of Korea and the National Research Foundation of Korea (Seoul, South Korea; 2017-2019) Project number: NRF-2017S1A3A2066788)
- Metatrends (Seoul, South Korea; 2014)

SKILLS

STATA, R, Python, SAS

PH.D. COURSES

- Economic Data Analysis
- Consumer Choice
- Game Theory
- Econometric Analysis I
- Econometric Analysis II
- Econometric Analysis III
- Econometric Analysis IV
- Programming for Econometrics
- Applied Policy Analysis
- PhD Seminar: Theory Building
- Research Methods I
- Applied Economics PhD Seminar (Research Methods II)
- International Management
- Organizational Theory
- Strategy I
- Strategy II
- Behavioral Strategy
- Non-Market Strategy
- Technology Strategy
- Seminar in Entrepreneurship
- Sem: Adv Methods Special Topic (Social Network Analysis)
- Teaching in Higher Education

Research Interests

Yeon Jin Kim

In my research, I ask the following questions: *What forms of structural interventions, from which stakeholders, are most beneficial to startups, and how do these effects vary across startups?* As part of my dissertation, I explore entrepreneurs' mentor selection decisions, the trade-offs involved in their choices, and the downstream consequences for startup performance. In particular, I examine the gender differences in founders' mentor preferences and propose that gender-based preferences may act as a constraint on women entrepreneurs, given a limited supply of women mentors. More specifically, if men entrepreneurs base their mentor choices on mentors' industry expertise, while women entrepreneurs seek both expertise and gender homophily, the result will be that women entrepreneurs end up matched with less expert women mentors.

To test these ideas, I utilize unique data from a venture competition that matches mentors with founders based on founders' mentor preferences, which allows me to tease out the treatment effect of founders' preferences and the selection effect of mentor matching. The venture competition is a statewide competition led by the Holmes Center for Entrepreneurship at the Carlson School, attracting founders with diverse backgrounds and ages from various industries across the state. Analysis of 441 startups and 638 mentors from the competition confirms my main arguments, suggesting that women founders' mentor preferences limit women founders' opportunities to receive mentorship from preferred expert mentors. This result is stronger when there is a greater limitation in the supply of women expert mentors and less salience of mentors' industry expertise. Further tests suggest that founders' expectations for interpersonal support from same-gender mentors are the main driver of their preferences, ruling out potential mechanisms such as gender-based stereotypes. Moreover, findings also show that women-led startups that do not get their preferred expert mentors have a lower chance of survival. The study thus suggests that women founders' additional preference for women mentors may come at a cost to their performance, unless an adequate supply of expert women mentors is ensured. In addition to my job-market paper, my dissertation examines the trade-offs entrepreneurs make based on their prior experience and its consequences, and contributes to the design of entrepreneurship training programs based on entrepreneurs' pre-existing knowledge.

I have also been developing a pipeline of projects, including a study that investigates the mechanisms behind why women founders prefer women mentors and to what extent they are willing to trade expertise for gender homophily when choosing a mentor. Another project I am working on examines startup peers as an important stakeholder for startup success, and it explores how startups learn from their peers in accelerator settings. This project is co-authored with my advisor Sandy Yu, and we are currently finalizing the manuscript for submission. Moreover, I also have a working project focusing on the role of policy, examining how federal and state R&D subsidies influence innovation and performance among R&D-focused startups.

As shown above, my research interests are at the intersection of entrepreneurship and inequality and engage core questions in the economics of innovation. While entrepreneurship is central to my research agenda, it is also a key channel through which innovation occurs, and a large body of entrepreneurship research emphasizes the economic impact of innovation commercialization. The boot camp's integrated approach of combining foundational frameworks and frontier empirical work, and exposure to the NBER innovation research community, would help me situate my dissertation research within the broader innovation literature. Moreover, the opportunity will help me refine my approach to policy-relevant questions around entrepreneurial support and innovation ecosystems. Attending the boot camp at this stage would be particularly impactful as I further develop my research agenda and deepen my engagement with innovation-focused scholarship.

TULANE UNIVERSITY

Recommendation Letter for Yeon Jin Kim

Dear Heidi and Ben,

I am pleased to offer my highest recommendation for Yeon Jin Kim for the fifth Innovation Research Boot Camp. Yeon Jin will complete her PhD at the Carlson School of Management, University of Minnesota, this summer and then join me at Tulane as the inaugural Levy-Rosenblum Postdoctoral Fellow. Importantly, her research has focused primarily on entrepreneurship, so attendance at the Boot Camp will fill a critical gap in her PhD training. Yeon Jin is a promising young scholar, and I have no doubt she would be a positive addition to the Boot Camp.

Briefly, Yeon Jin's dissertation—recipient of a prestigious Will Mitchell Dissertation Research Grant from the Strategic Management Society—examines how mentoring structures shape outcomes for female entrepreneurs. Her work is theoretically sophisticated, empirically creative, and highly consequential for both scholarship and practice. She challenges the conventional assumption that same-gender mentoring is uniformly beneficial by showing how homophilous preferences, combined with the limited supply of expert female mentors, can unintentionally disadvantage women entrepreneurs.

Empirically, Yeon Jin leverages unique, proprietary data from the Minnesota Cup, a statewide business plan competition, to observe entrepreneurs' mentor preferences, realized mentor matches, and venture outcomes. This setting enables her to cleanly separate demand-side preferences from supply-side constraints—an analytical distinction that is rarely possible and represents a major contribution. Her findings demonstrate that while female entrepreneurs value both mentor expertise and gender, men prioritize expertise alone. As a result, women are more likely to be matched with less expert mentors, with measurable consequences for venture survival. These insights offer an important reframing of how mentoring programs should be designed to support inclusive entrepreneurship.

Thank you in advance for your consideration of Yeon Jin. I truly believe she would greatly benefit from attendance at the Boot Camp.

Very truly yours,



Matthew J. Higgins

Professor & Earl P. and Ethel B. Koerner Chair of Strategy & Entrepreneurship
Director, Levy Rosenblum Institute
Research Associate, National Bureau of Economic Research
Research Fellow, Max Planck Institute for Innovation and Competition