

Date: Sunday, April 13, 2025

**Dear Provost Strobel and Vice Provost Bakemeier,**

Thank you for taking the time to consider this appeal, which I realize is not a happy circumstance for anyone. I write to formally request reconsideration of the negative university-level decision in my tenure and promotion case. This decision was highly unexpected since I had heard from senior faculty in my school starting Spring 2024 that they were very confident in my case, and did not see any issues. I believe it is highly likely that this decision was based on a process that was not consistent with both the intent and implementation of Yale's policies, as well as basic fairness and integrity, in ways that I detail below. With reference to Section III.L.3.a of the University handbook, I believe (i) and (ii) are directly relevant to this appeal. I therefore request your kind reconsideration and redress as detailed below.

**(1) External Letter Writers:** A critical procedural concern involves the selection and solicitation of external letter writers. As outlined in Yale's guidance and instructions given to me, candidates may submit names of scholars who can meaningfully evaluate their work for the committee to consider and use. I took proactive steps to comply with this process during the course of submission. Particularly relevant in this context, I wrote to my committee chair ahead of the final submission to clarify how I should submit my suggested reviewers, since the Interfolio system lacked a designated field for this purpose. It must be noted that everything else in my tenure packet was entered through the Interfolio system.

My question went unanswered, even though I received replies to other logistical and substantive queries during that period. This silence, coupled with strict attention paid to other submission details — such as several communications with both the chair and the Deputy Dean's office regarding the word count of my research statement — gave me the impression that input on letter writers was neither expected nor permitted in my case. It seemed odd to me at the time, but having received prior encouragement regarding tenure from my school, I thought this was what was expected in my case.

I have since learned that this is not standard and that candidate input is typically sought and valued, and forms a crucially important part of the tenure process, especially for cases involving interdisciplinary work like mine. The importance is magnified in my case since my work spans multiple methodologies, including traditional quantitative marketing models (especially structural models) as well as new machine-learning methods (which, while of very wide and intense interest nowadays, is not widely understood in depth). Consequently, top experts who can evaluate my case with the necessary depth are those at the forefront, and actively conducting research, in these areas. I submit that such external evaluators are more likely to provide an informed and accurate assessment of my work.

**(2) Years on Clock:** Following the university-level decision, senior faculty have referred to my tenure record as spanning 14 years — a characterization that is factually inaccurate and highly misleading, given the two officially approved clock stoppages during my time at Yale. This is not merely a technical oversight — it is a substantive procedural failure with direct implications for how my scholarly record was judged.

While I have not been given direct access to how my record was presented to the University Standing Committee, the consistency of this mischaracterization strongly suggests that an incorrect timeline may

have influenced the evaluation at the university level. This consistent mischaracterization raises serious questions about how my record was presented and interpreted during the review process. Even if the reports formally list the timeline as 12 years, that alone would not be sufficient if the evaluative framing — either in committee discussions, cover letters, or contextual materials — encouraged a 14-year interpretation. One person speaking about such an interpretation is quite likely to lead others to a similar interpretation. I therefore request a clear accounting of how the timeline was communicated to everyone who viewed the packet throughout the review process, and whether any internal documents or oral briefings may have shaped the perception of my record in ways that are inconsistent with Yale's tenure policies. A process is only fair if both the data as well as the evaluative lens applied therein are accurate, appropriate and policy-compliant.

If my tenure case was assessed using an inflated timeline, then the outcome is, by definition, invalid and must be revisited. I would like to share the following information about my record.

- I completed my doctoral degree in 2010 and started as an Assistant Professor at Harvard University that year.
- I moved to Yale University in July 2014 and have been at Yale since then.
- My tenure application was submitted in Fall 2024.
- At Yale, to the best of my knowledge, I have had two years of extensions reflecting time off the tenure clock. The first extension was a parental leave, including teaching relief, for which I had received approval from the Provost, prior to my promotion to Associate Professor. The second extension was related to the COVID pandemic provided by the university to all faculty on the tenure clock.

Thus, my record at the time of submission can be correctly viewed as either a) an 8-year record at Yale, or b) a 12-year record spanning my time as a faculty member. Characterizing my record as a 14-year record would not be consistent with the university providing time “off the clock.”

### **(3) Lack of Consistency in Evaluation Standards Over Time and Between SOM and the University**

In 2019–2020, I was promoted to Associate Professor following a thorough and positive review by the Yale School of Management (SOM). In my debrief with Deputy Dean Edieal Pinker and my committee chair, I was explicitly advised that publishing my working papers in top journals in my field would be the primary step toward a successful tenure case. No other concerns were raised by anyone. Over the following years, I received consistent and affirmative guidance from multiple senior faculty members, including repeated confirmation that I was on track for tenure. As recently as Spring 2024, my committee chair stated that I had “done everything required for tenure at Yale.” That assessment was ultimately reflected in SOM's formal support of my promotion and tenure case.

The subsequent reversal and denial at the university level raises three fundamental concerns:

*(a) Inconsistency of Standards:* The denial appears to conflict directly with the longstanding institutional standards applied during my earlier promotion and throughout years of faculty mentorship. A tenure

process must be grounded in consistent expectations over time, particularly when faculty are advising and evaluating based on those standards.

*(b) Lack of Transparent Communication:* If the university applied a different set of criteria than those used and communicated by SOM, those criteria were never disclosed to me. I was not given an opportunity to meet them, nor was I ever advised that a different evaluative framework would govern the final decision. A process that applies undisclosed standards fails the basic requirements of procedural fairness.

*(c) Potential Misrepresentation at the University Level:* If no different criteria were applied, the university's rejection of a case that received strong support from experts most qualified to evaluate it raises serious concerns about how my case was presented and advocated at the university level, including at the Standing Advisory and Appointments Committee. I am concerned that my record may not have been accurately conveyed during that stage of review, or that the strength of my case and SOM's positive evaluation was not appropriately represented. Without transparency into those proceedings, I cannot rule out the possibility of miscommunication or mismanagement that materially affected the outcome.

In sum, each of the above issues, independently and collectively, reflects a breakdown in process that calls into question the fairness, transparency, and integrity of the university-level review. I respectfully request that these procedural concerns be investigated and remedied through a reevaluation of my case.

### **Redress Request**

I respectfully request that the University Faculty Review Committee revisit my case, with particular attention to the procedural irregularities noted above. Specifically, I would request that:

1. The review committee supplements the original set of external evaluations by soliciting additional letters from experts I recommend — highly respected scholars with the disciplinary expertise necessary to fairly and fully assess my work.
2. My record be accurately characterized and evaluated in terms of time on the tenure clock, in accordance with Yale's own policies on leaves and extensions.

I believe that the process, if fully aligned with Yale's standards and commitments to fairness and academic rigor, would result in a positive outcome — one more consistent with the evaluations at the department and school level, and with Yale's standing as a leader in academic excellence and integrity.

Given the substantial irregularities in procedure, and the consequences to my career and reputation, I am compelled to pursue avenues to seek redress, and to leave no stone unturned to ensure that my case is reviewed justly. I truly hope and expect that the university's appeal process will help provide a channel for resolution.

Sincerely,



Vineet Kumar

Associate Professor  
Yale School of Management  
165 Whitney Avenue, New Haven, CT 06511