# Twitter Thread by Gaurav Sabnis ■■■■



**Gaurav Sabnis ■■■■**
@gauravsabnis

**Having read @Nidhi's account about the scam, here are a few details about how US academia hiring works, as are relevant to her case. And the perpetrator of the scam is most likely an academic or at least a former academic with connections.**

US unis generally follow similar processes when it comes to hiring professors. But the processes depend on your "track". As do the norms, eligibility, timeline, etc. I for example am on a research tenure track. I was Assistant Professor for 7 years before tenure made me Associate

On that track, you need a proper PhD from an accredited university. Then a long process to get hired as an Assistant Prof. Then 6-7 years to prove your credentials, primarily in terms of research. Then less than 10% get tenure and earn the right to be Associate Profs.

But education is more about just research. So unis also have other tracks like Teaching, Industry, Practice. Here, expectations of academic research are minimal to non-existent. If you just wanna teach 95% of the time and you're good at it, you can still get a job!

They have their own identical ranks - Assistant, Associate, (Full) Professor. That they advance through as their careers progress. Based almost entirely on their teaching performance. Not research.
These folks also must have a PhD or at least be working towards a PhD. Typically.

Then there is the Industry or Practice track. Here you hire people with accomplished careers in the industry to come teach your students. Their work experience is their qualification. They don't need a PhD or often even a Masters (may vary across unis). Nidhi would qualify.

For research tracks, the process is extremely elaborate. Multiple interviews, campus visits (which covid messed up last year), social events, drinks, breakfast, the whole thing. I often liken the process to an Indian arranged marriage. Where everyone in the family has a say.

For other tracks, it's not necessarily that elaborate. Especially Industry/Practice tracks. There, unis hire people, exactly like Nidhi, whose careers matter more than their degrees. She is one of the OG anchors of Indian cable news with 20+ years experience.

While the hiring process isn't that elaborate, it still has some element of personal contact and at the very least, one campus visit to meet the faculty.
But we all know 2020. Unis were in chaos. US univs especially, cos Trump used covid as an excuse to hit unis even more.

What I'm saying is, if my school had a suitable "line" open for an Associate Professor of Practice/Industry in journalism, and if I were on the hiring committee (as I often am for such positions). And if Nidhi's profile were in consideration. I'd be okay hiring her over email.

Y'all have no idea how chaotic 2020 was for US universities (and continues to be). I haven't been to my office in 10 months.
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In that context, everything Nidhi describes in her post tracks perfectly. I was on the inside of some hiring processes last year. That's how they went

The visa process was especially screwed up by Trump and Pompeo in 2020 so "how did she not suspect during visa paperwork?" is not a legit objection. We here in actual YS univs were struggling to cope with the visa situation for incoming international students and faculty.

So my larger first point is, from whatever I've seen and read, I don't think Nidhi was particularly gullible or even conceited, as some folks are suggesting, to believe that Harvard made her an offer. Her resume could very legit justify at least consideration for such a job.

The second point is my intuition (and it's just an intuition so far) that there was some inside involvement from someone associated with Harvard in this scam. Someone who knew how the process works from the inside. And could side step basic googling verifications.

That they strung her along for months, to me, indicates sophisticated targeting, not just a random catfishing prank or even a garden variety phishing attack. This is someone very sophisticated somehow connected to Harvard who wanted to target Nidhi Razdan and succeeded.

Anyway, I'll close by saying, this scam is really terrifying as an academic. And as someone who's started some sabbatical shopping at some nice universities, I'm gonna do extra due diligence at every step. I already get clumsy phishing attempts like this.



## Re: Regarding Course selection

A

**Ananya -**
a1@stevens.edu

To You gsabnis@stevens.edu

Monday, January 11, 12:19 PM

Hi Gaurav,

Good Day!

I Ananya got admitted to Stevens Institute of technology spring 2021. I wanted to opt for Mktng Strategy in Digital World I always looked up work in Marketing and other strategies .I wish to opt for the course and work with you to reach finishing line . Please do let me accept my request for the next set of action plan .

Thank you,

There but for the grace of a scammer dumb enough to write something incomprehensible like "Please do let me accept my request for the next set of action plan", goes I.
Remember that.
I've been scam immune so far.
Not arrogant enough anymore to think I will be immune forever.

This is a good P.S. for the whole thread from another indian origin US academic.

https://t.co/Wh3mxm2oUh

> We may have to wait for the investigation to be completed. But her article clarifies a lot of things that align with my knowledge of how academia works especially the weirdness due to the pandemic.
>
> — Sibin (@sibinmohan) January 16, 2021