

April 7, 2026

Re: Joshua Scott Wesalo, MD, PhD – Letter of Recommendation for the 2026 Heed Resident Retreat

To the Selection Committee of the Heed Ophthalmic Foundation Resident Retreat,

We are pleased to recommend **Joshua Scott Wesalo, MD, PhD**, for consideration for the **2026 Heed Resident Retreat**. We serve as Associate Professors of Ophthalmology and Residency Program Directors at Northwestern University Feinberg School of Medicine, where we work closely with ophthalmology residents across all stages of training. Joshua is a highly capable, clinically effective and refreshingly curious, PGY-3 resident who has demonstrated consistent excellence in clinical care, professionalism, and academic engagement, and he represents the type of resident who would benefit meaningfully from participation in the Heed Retreat.

Joshua has distinguished himself through **strong intelligence, genuine intellectual curiosity, and a unique work ethic**. He entered residency with extensive prior research training as an MD/PhD, and over the course of residency has demonstrated a thoughtful evolution toward a career as an **academic ophthalmologist with a focus on complex patient care, teaching, and scholarly activity**. He approaches this transition deliberately and with a clear sense of purpose.

Joshua completed an **MD/PhD (Medical Scientist Training Program)** at the University of Pittsburgh, earning a PhD in Chemistry with a perfect 4.0 graduate GPA and defending a highly sophisticated thesis focused on **light and small-molecule control of protein function**. His research career has been productive and mature for someone at this stage of training. He has authored **numerous peer-reviewed publications** spanning chemical biology, developmental biology, and ophthalmic imaging in high-impact peer-reviewed journals. His work is notable not only for its rigor and innovation but also for its **clear translational relevance to ophthalmology and vision restoration**. His pioneering work in **genetic code expansion, optically controlled proteins, and retinal organoid and zebrafish models** lays the foundation for precisely targeted therapies for inherited retinal disease and developmental eye disorders. Joshua's background in research provides an important foundation for this academic path. While residency has appropriately shifted his focus toward clinical practice, education, and patient-centered scholarship, he retains a disciplined, analytical approach to clinical problems and engages in research activities that complement his clinical interests without detracting from his primary responsibilities as a resident physician.

Clinically, Joshua is an **outstanding resident**. He demonstrates careful diagnostic reasoning, solid judgment, and a methodical approach to challenging cases. He is particularly engaged in the care of patients with complex retinal and ocular inflammatory disease, where his attention to detail and ability to integrate clinical findings and imaging are clear strengths. He approaches uncertainty with maturity and

preparation, and his case presentations reflect a high level of insight and reflection. Joshua is a frequent contributor to the discussion in our weekly Grand Rounds, often offering a unique perspective and novel solutions to clinical challenges. Joshua is considering pursuing a uveitis fellowship – a natural fit for his detail-oriented clinical practice style and future academic career.

Joshua is **deeply committed to his patients** and consistently delivers compassionate, respectful care. He communicates clearly, is attentive to patient concerns, and earns trust easily. He is equally well regarded by colleagues. He is professional, reliable, and approachable, with a positive attitude and friendly demeanor that make him a valued member of the clinical team. He contributes to a supportive work environment and is someone faculty and residents alike enjoy working with.

As a teacher, Joshua is thoughtful and effective. Junior residents and medical students frequently turn to him for guidance, and he takes this responsibility seriously. His teaching style is calm, clear, and grounded in clinical reasoning.

The **Heed Resident Retreat** aligns well with Joshua's current goals and stage of development. Its emphasis on mentorship, career development, academic leadership, and the integration of clinical work with teaching and scholarship is well matched to his aspiration to build a career as an **academic ophthalmologist**, caring for complex patients while contributing meaningfully to education and scholarly work. We believe he would benefit from the mentorship and perspective the retreat offers and would contribute positively to discussions with his peers.

In summary, Joshua Wesalo is a **truly outstanding, well-rounded ophthalmology resident** with clear potential for a successful career in academic ophthalmology. He is reliable, thoughtful, and committed to patients and learning. We are happy to recommend him as an ideal candidate for the **2026 Heed Resident Retreat** and believe he would represent our residency program well and be an effective and active participant in the retreat.

Please feel free to contact me if further information would be helpful.

Sincerely,



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