

M. Reza Vagefi, MD
Professor and Chair
Department of Ophthalmology
Director, New England Eye Center

April 27, 2026

RE: Virali Shah, MD, MBA-H

Heed Ophthalmic Foundation Annual Resident Retreat

Dear Society of Heed Fellows Trustees,

I am delighted to offer my enthusiastic recommendation for Dr. Virali Shah to participate in the annual Heed Ophthalmic Foundation Resident Retreat. Dr. Shah is a PGY3 ophthalmology resident at the New England Eye Center at Tufts Medical Center and has distinguished herself as an outstanding trainee with a clear commitment to academic ophthalmology, medical education, advocacy, research, and leadership. She represents precisely the type of resident whom the Heed Retreat is designed to support, a thoughtful and talented young ophthalmologist with both the ability and desire to contribute meaningfully to the future of our field.

Prior to joining our residency program, Dr. Shah completed the Leadership in Medicine combined degree program, earning a Bachelor of Science in Psychology and Biology from Union College, a Master of Business Administration in Healthcare Administration from Clarkson University, and her medical degree from Albany Medical College. Her academic record is outstanding. She graduated summa cum laude, was elected to Phi Beta Kappa and Alpha Omega Alpha, and received her MD with Distinction in Research. These accomplishments reflect not only her intellectual ability, but also the sustained discipline, curiosity, and breadth of perspective that she brings to medicine.

During residency, Dr. Shah has continued to demonstrate the qualities of an emerging academic ophthalmologist. Clinically, she is conscientious, observant, and deeply engaged in

patient care. In clinic, her interactions with faculty and peers, she is consistently prepared, thoughtful, and collaborative. Her interests lie in oculofacial plastic surgery, and she has applied for American Society of Ophthalmic Plastic and Reconstructive Surgery fellowship training.

Dr. Shah has been actively engaged in scholarly work throughout her training. She has authored peer-reviewed publications across ophthalmology and other medical disciplines, including work on cutaneous apocrine-derived eyelid lesions, retinopathy of prematurity, and ketorolac administration during oculoplastic surgery. She also has multiple manuscripts submitted or in preparation, including work related to eyelid pathology, cataract surgery sustainability, ophthalmic genetics, and ocular oncology.

Equally notable is Dr. Shah's commitment to leadership, advocacy, and education. She serves as the ophthalmology liaison to the Tufts Resident Leadership Council, is a Young Ophthalmologist Executive Committee leader for the Massachusetts Society of Eye Physicians and Surgeons, and represented Massachusetts as an Advocacy Ambassador at the American Academy of Ophthalmology Mid-Year Forum. With a background in the arts, dance, and narrative medicine, she has also developed a strong interest in visual literacy and innovative teaching approaches, including educational programming that explores the intersection of art and ophthalmology.

All in all, I believe Dr. Shah should be strongly considered for the Heed Ophthalmic Foundation Resident Retreat. She has already demonstrated a commitment to the core pillars of academic ophthalmology: excellent patient care, scholarship, education, leadership, and service. She is thoughtful, driven, and collaborative, and she has the potential to develop into an impactful academic ophthalmologist and physician-leader. I am confident that participation in the Heed Retreat would further support her professional development and connect her with a community of mentors and peers aligned with her long-term goals.



Please feel free to contact me directly if I can provide any additional information. Dr. Shah has waived the opportunity to review this letter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'M. Reza Vagefi'.

M. Reza Vagefi, MD

Professor and Chair, Department of Ophthalmology

Tufts University School of Medicine

Director, New England Eye Center

Tufts Medical Center | Tufts Medicine

