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April 11, 2026

Society of Heed Fellows Trustees
Re: Nomination of Bryce Bajar, MD, PhD for the Heed Ophthalmic Foundation Resident Retreat

Dear Colleagues,

I am delighted to write the strongest possible recommendation for **Dr. Bryce Bajar, MD, PhD**, in support of his candidacy to attend the **2026 Heed Ophthalmic Foundation Resident Retreat**. Dr. Bajar is an exceptionally talented physician-scientist whose unique combination of scientific innovation, clinical excellence, and wholehearted commitment to academic ophthalmology positions him as a future leader in our field.

Dr. Bajar's scientific foundation is deep and interdisciplinary. As an undergraduate in Bioengineering at Stanford University, he made significant contributions to the development of genetically encoded fluorescent reporters for live single-cell imaging, including tools that have been widely adopted for studying kinase activity, cell cycle dynamics, and intracellular signaling . This early work, published in *Cell*, *Nature Methods*, and *Science*, reflects not only technical sophistication but also a capacity for innovation that has continued throughout his career.

He went on to complete his MD/PhD training through the UCLA-Caltech Medical Scientist Training Program, where his doctoral work in neuroscience led to the discovery of patterned developmental activity during visual circuit formation and its role in synapse development . This work fundamentally advanced understanding of visual circuit assembly and earned him the Samuel Eiduson Award for best dissertation by the UCLA Brain Research Institute and the Genetics Society of America Award for best scientific image of 2023. His research was funded by the NEI and published in *Nature, Developmental Neurobiology* and *Neuron.* Bryce's ability to integrate cutting-edge imaging, genetics, and systems neuroscience exemplifies the type of rigorous, curiosity-driven science that defines outstanding clinician-scientists.

We were delighted when Dr. Bajar joined the UCSF Ophthalmology residency program, and as a resident, he continues to build an impressive trajectory that bridges bench and bedside research. His current work with Drs. Yvonne Ou and Ying Han spans both basic and clinical domains, including research into retinal ganglion cell transplantation and the role of neuronal activity in retinal circuit reassembly, as well as the development of advanced diagnostics for glaucoma using adaptive optics and electrophysiologic approaches. These efforts reflect a clear commitment to translating fundamental biological insights into clinically meaningful advances.

In addition to his outstanding research accomplishments, Dr. Bajar's dedication to clinical care and service is exemplary. He has been recognized with the **Julius R. Krevans Award for Clinical Excellence**, underscoring his outstanding patient care and commitment to underserved populations . He is also an enthusiastic educator and mentor, with a track record of teaching across multiple levels and

guiding trainees who have gone on to successful academic careers . These qualities speak to his maturity, professionalism, and the breadth of his contributions beyond research and further demonstrate his potential for future success in academic ophthalmology.

Dr. Bajar has articulated a clear and compelling vision for his career as a clinician-scientist in academic ophthalmology. He aims to pursue glaucoma fellowship training and ultimately establish an independent research program focused on advancing diagnostics and understanding of retinal disease, with long-term goals of securing K08 and R01 funding. His commitment to mentorship, scientific discovery, and excellence in patient care is evident and deeply aligned with the mission of the Heed Ophthalmic Foundation.

Given his exceptional intellect, creativity, and dedication, I am confident that Dr. Bajar will benefit tremendously from participation in the Heed Resident Retreat. The opportunity to engage with leaders in the field and connect with like-minded peers will further refine his career trajectory and accelerate his development as an academic ophthalmologist. Just as importantly, he will contribute meaningfully to the retreat community through his insight, enthusiasm, and collaborative spirit.

In summary, I give Dr. Bryce Bajar my most enthusiastic recommendation for participation in the 2026 Heed Ophthalmic Foundation Resident Retreat. He is a rising star in ophthalmology and a future leader in vision science whose career will undoubtedly have a lasting impact on our field. Thank you for your thoughtful consideration of this outstanding candidate.

Sincerely,

Jacque L. Duncan, M.D.
Wayne and Gladys Valley Foundation Distinguished Professor of Ophthalmology
University of California, San Francisco