

**April 18, 2026**

Dear Members of the Heed Retreat Selection Committee,

I am delighted to offer this letter of enthusiastic support on behalf of Dr. Matthew Henderson for participation in the 20th Annual Heed Ophthalmic Foundation Residents Retreat. As Residency Program Director at the Cole Eye Institute, I have had the opportunity to work closely with many residents over the years, and Dr. Henderson is among the most capable trainees I have worked with. He is exceptionally bright, clinically mature, productive, and dependable, with a genuine interest in building a career in academic ophthalmology.

Dr. Henderson came to our program after graduating from Robert Wood Johnson Medical School, where he was inducted into Alpha Omega Alpha Honor Medical Society. Before medical school, he attended University of Pennsylvania, where he effortlessly balanced his academic coursework while playing Division I football as a placekicker (as one might expect this background, Matt similarly has unflappable nerves in the clinic and OR setting). Matt is a genuinely multitalented person, and that combination of discipline, composure, and competitiveness has translated naturally into residency training.

Between college and medical school, Matt spent two years working as a research coordinator at University of Pennsylvania. During that time, he gained meaningful early experience in clinical investigation, study design, and data management. Most notably, he helped design and conduct a randomized controlled trial evaluating the efficacy of perioperative intravenous dexamethasone on postoperative analgesia in scleral buckle surgery, work he later brought to publication as first author during residency. That level of sustained ownership of a project speaks to his initiative and ability to see

important work through to completion. He has a strong interest in continuing this work in the future, particularly as a site investigator for clinical trials.

While in medical school, Matt completed a research project evaluating academic productivity among orthopedic surgeons. After matching into ophthalmology, he independently recognized that the same methodology could be thoughtfully applied across our field. He subsequently developed a series of manuscripts evaluating research productivity in multiple ophthalmic subspecialties using the Relative Citation Ratio. Importantly, these were projects of his own creation. He identified the concept, designed the studies, carried out the data collection and analysis, and served as the primary author on the resulting manuscripts. That level of scholarly independence is uncommon for a resident and speaks to genuine academic potential.

Since arriving at our program, he has distinguished himself in every setting. He is supremely efficient, communicates well with patients, and handles responsibility with maturity. He is the kind of resident faculty trust and co-residents rely on. He performs well under pressure, stays even keeled, and consistently shows sound judgment. His fund of knowledge is excellent and is reflected by his consistently scoring above the 90th percentile on the annual Ophthalmic Knowledge Assessment Program examination, including a recent performance in the 97th percentile nationally.

Dr. Henderson has also built a strong record of scholarship during residency. He has authored numerous peer-reviewed publications, including several first-author papers, across multiple ophthalmic subspecialties such as retina, glaucoma, cornea, pediatrics, neuro-ophthalmology, and oculoplastics. His work has appeared in journals including JAMA Ophthalmology, Ophthalmology Retina, Retina, Cornea, and Ophthalmic Plastic and Reconstructive Surgery. He has also presented at meetings such as ARVO, American Society of Retina Specialists, and the Vit-Buckle Society. What stands out most is that he is not simply adding lines to a CV. He is organized, follows through, writes well, and takes real ownership of his projects.

On a personal level, Matt is easy to work with and universally respected and adored throughout the department. He is humble, selfless, receptive to feedback, and naturally supportive of junior residents and students. He contributes positively wherever he is placed. Those qualities matter in academic medicine, and I think they give him real long-term potential as a future fellowship director, residency program director, or other leader within our field.

Matt is currently pursuing a fellowship in Oculoplastic Surgery and is likely to be a top contender amongst his peers. He is very interested in following an academic track and is focusing his fellowship search on the programs that can provide him the necessary mentorship to achieve this goal. I believe he would benefit greatly from the mentorship and exposure offered through the Heed Residents Retreat, and I am equally confident he would be a strong representative of our program there. He has the talent, work ethic, and temperament to make meaningful contributions to academic ophthalmology over the course of his career.

Our residency program is nominating two residents this year, and we are happy to provide funding for a second resident participant in accordance with the application guidelines.

I give Dr. Henderson my highest recommendation without reservation. Please feel free to contact me if I can provide any additional information.

Sincerely,



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Jeffrey M. Goshe MD  
Director, Cole Eye Institute Residency Program  
Roscoe J. Kennedy, MD Family Chair of Ophthalmic Education  
[goshej@ccf.org](mailto:goshej@ccf.org)  
(216) 444-0845