

April 26th, 2026

Re: Sandy Wu, Candidate for Heed Residency Retreat

Dear Heed Retreat Selection Committee:

It is my pleasure to nominate Sandy (Jo-Hsuan) Wu for the Heed Foundation Resident Retreat. She is an exceptional physician-scientist in training who has already demonstrated a **level of academic productivity, intellectual rigor, and drive that is rarely seen at this stage. She has the background, discipline, and vision to become a true leader in academic ophthalmology.**

Sandy's background is remarkable. She completed medical training at the top medical school in Taiwan, National Taiwan University, with outstanding academic distinction, earning multiple NTU Academic Excellence Awards throughout medical school. She was also recognized as Best Intern, Best Surgical Intern, and Most-thanked Intern at National Taiwan University Hospital/College of Medicine, which reflects not only her academic abilities but also her clinical skill, work ethic, and interpersonal gifts.

After medical school, Sandy pursued advanced research training at the Shiley Eye Institute at UC San Diego, where she worked as a glaucoma research fellow and ophthalmology informatics research fellow. During this time, she developed deep expertise in glaucoma, ocular imaging, OCT/OCTA biomarkers, artificial intelligence, and population-level ophthalmic research. She also collaborated with the Wilmer Precision Ophthalmology Center of Excellence and served as the **DIGS dataset image review leader — a role that speaks to the trust others placed in her judgment, reliability, and scientific rigor.**

Her academic productivity has been extraordinary. Sandy has authored **over 90 peer-reviewed publications, including numerous first-author studies in major ophthalmology journals.** Her work includes first-author publications on glaucoma progression detection using OCT and OCTA, social determinants of health and health disparities in glaucoma, ophthalmic visit non-adherence, machine learning for glaucoma detection, deep learning in retinal-image-based oculomics, and large language models in ophthalmology. This is not just a large body of work — it is a **focused academic portfolio at the intersection of clinical ophthalmology, imaging, artificial intelligence, and health equity.**

Sandy has also been recognized externally for her work. She received the WEAVR Foundation Travel Grant for a first-authored ARVO abstract in 2023 and the New York Academy of Medicine Resident Research second-place poster award in 2025. She has presented at major national and international meetings including ARVO, AAO, ASCRS, the World Glaucoma Congress, the Vit-Buckle Society, OSN Retina, Women in Ophthalmology, and NYSOS Envision. In addition, she serves as a peer reviewer for a wide range of leading journals, including Ophthalmology, American Journal of Ophthalmology, IOVS, British Journal of Ophthalmology, Ophthalmology Glaucoma, Ophthalmology Retina, Translational Vision Science & Technology, Journal of Glaucoma, Annals of Internal Medicine, npj Digital Medicine, and others. She also serves as a review editor for the Frontiers in Medicine Ophthalmology section.

Since joining our residency program at Columbia, Sandy has continued to excel. I (RWSC) am amazed at how easily she has fit in, and how well she communicates with patients, faculty, and staff alike. During her internship, our dermatology faculty went out of his way to compliment her incredible aptitude and attitude. **Our own faculty have been similarly amazed by her abilities and work ethic.** She is intellectually curious, disciplined, and fully engaged in both clinical care and research. She has continued work with our glaucoma and neuro-ophthalmology divisions while also expanding into

AI applications in ophthalmic care and resident training improvement. Despite the demands of residency, she remains academically active because she is motivated by genuine scientific curiosity and a desire to make an impact.

Clinically, Sandy is thoughtful, serious, and committed. She approaches patient care with humility, while also bringing the perspective of someone who has already spent years thinking deeply about how to translate research into clinical practice. Her trajectory is somewhat unusual in the best possible way: she has already built the foundation of an independent investigator, and residency is now allowing her to connect that scientific foundation even more directly to patient care.

Sandy is also very clear about her long-term goals. **In her personal statement, she writes that she came to the United States because she wanted to “make an impact” and become part of the forefront of ophthalmology. That motivation is very real.** Her journey from Taiwan to the United States, through rigorous research training and now residency, reflects resilience, courage, and a sustained commitment to academic leadership on a global stage. She hopes to become a clinician-scientist who advances vision science, translates discoveries into patient care, and mentors future trainees.

In summary, Sandy is an **all-star resident with exceptional potential to become a leader in academic ophthalmology.** She already possesses the CV of a full professor in ophthalmology. She has shown extraordinary academic productivity, meaningful external recognition, and a clear vision for her future as a clinician-scientist. **She is exactly the type of candidate who will take full advantage of the Heed Resident Retreat and contribute meaningfully to it.** We give her our strongest possible recommendation.

Please do not hesitate to contact me (RWSC) at 617-519-0597 or rc2631@cumc.columbia.edu with any questions or concerns. Sandy has waived her right to see this letter. Please note that if both of our residents are accepted for the retreat, our department will support the second resident.

Sincerely,



Royce W. S. Chen, M.D.
Jean Sheng Associate Professor of Ophthalmology at CUMC
Vice Chair of Education
Residency Program Director
Vitreoretinal Surgery and Uveitis
Edward S. Harkness Eye Institute
Columbia University Irving Medical Center



George A. (Jack) Cioffi, M.D.
Edward S. Harkness Professor & Chair
Jean and Richard Deems Professor