Curiosity balanced with discipline and enthusiasm has defined my path toward a career in academic vitreoretinal surgery and ocular oncology. From a young age, I was captivated by the natural world. First through a plastic microscope examining leaves in my family's backyard, and later through a confocal microscope performing immunohistochemistry while pursuing a PhD in genetics to understand the molecular circuitry that defines cell state in health and disease. It is this same curiosity and tenacity that drew me to medicine and ultimately to ophthalmology as a field uniquely positioned at the intersection of scientific innovation, surgery, and meaningful longitudinal patient care. Throughout my residency training, vitreoretinal surgery and ocular oncology have embodied these ideals, pairing clinical trials and innovation with the emotional intelligence required to build empathic connections with patients. These interests, coupled with a passion for teaching and research, have shaped my path toward academic ophthalmology.

Vitreoretinal surgery appeals to me because it demands scientific rigor, adaptability, and creative problem solving. At our monthly retina surgical conferences, I am continually inspired by the thoughtful creativity required to manage the unique complexity and potential complications of each case. I am equally drawn to the diversity of retinal pathology, which requires integrating clinical examination, multimodal imaging, and evidence-based treatment decisions to guide effective management. This is especially evident in uncertain or complex cases, where patience, adaptability, and clear communication with patients are essential. I have also become increasingly interested in ocular oncology, which adds a uniquely sensitive and impactful dimension to this work, demanding nuanced discussions with patients and families alongside meticulous clinical evaluation. Together, vitreoretinal surgery and ocular oncology represent dynamic subspecialties being transformed by clinical trials and rapidly advancing technologies, making them exciting fields in which I hope to contribute meaningfully over a lifetime.

Alongside striving for clinical and surgical excellence, I aim to maintain education and research as essential tenets of my future career. During graduate school, I discovered the power of drug repurposing and phenotypic screening to accelerate drug discovery. I hope to bring these approaches to retinal and oncologic pathologies, where opportunities for innovation remain vast. During residency, I have started to pursue these interests through studies investigating the role of glucagon-like peptide-1 receptor agonists in ocular health and disease using large electronic health record datasets, with aspirations to build on these findings through mechanistic studies using animal models and prospective imaging trials. Equally meaningful to me has been the opportunity to teach and mentor medical students and junior residents. Guiding trainees through understanding difficult concepts or performing their first procedures has been among the most rewarding parts of residency and has reinforced my desire to contribute as both a clinician-scientist and as an educator.

It is my goal to build a career in academic ophthalmology defined by curiosity, adaptability, and sustained commitment to innovation and mentorship. I view the Heed Resident Retreat as an incredible opportunity to make this vision tangible. I believe that expanding my network of mentors, gaining perspective on opportunities and pitfalls, and building relationships with peers on similar but distinct paths would prove to be invaluable. Each chapter of this journey so far has been deeply fulfilling, and I am eager to continue learning from others while refining my path toward a meaningful and successful career in academic ophthalmology.