



April 27, 2026

Re: Jovany Franco

Dear Heed Ophthalmic Foundation Selection Committee,

We are writing to offer our strongest recommendation for Dr. Jovany Franco for participation in the 20th Annual Heed Residents Retreat. We have had the pleasure of working closely with Dr. Franco in his role as an ophthalmology resident at the University of Michigan Kellogg Eye Center, where he has consistently distinguished himself as an exceptionally thoughtful clinician, a highly productive and methodologically rigorous researcher, and a dedicated mentor.

Dr. Franco's academic accomplishments are remarkable for his level of training. He has already developed an extensive body of scholarly work, including numerous peer-reviewed publications in leading ophthalmology journals. His research is both prolific and highly impactful, focusing on healthcare access, geographic disparities, and structural barriers to ophthalmic care. Using large national datasets including U.S. Census data, Medicare claims, institutional electronic health records, and Geographic Information Systems (GIS) methodologies, he has demonstrated technical sophistication and a clear commitment to improving the delivery of eye care to underserved populations.

A central theme of Dr. Franco's research examines geographic access deserts in ophthalmology, informed by both lived experience and quantitative analysis. His published work has mapped the national distribution of ophthalmologists and optometrists, identifying regions in which workforce supply falls critically short of patient need. Complementary studies have extended this approach to ophthalmic subspecialty care, with prior publications demonstrating substantial disparities in access to neuro-ophthalmologic and pediatric ophthalmic services. These studies provide rigorous evidence base for understanding how structural and geographic factors shape patient outcomes and care utilization at a population level.

Dr. Franco has also developed a focused and growing research portfolio at the intersection of retinal disease and health services research. Drawing from observed disparities in diabetic retinopathy outcomes within Latino communities, his work examines practice-level and community-level forces that influence retinal care delivery. Notably, his recently published work evaluates the impact of private equity consolidation on academic vitreoretinal surgical volume, while ongoing and forthcoming analyses investigate sociodemographic drivers of inequities in access to high-cost, on-label anti-VEGF therapy as well as delays in access to optical coherence tomography. Taken together, this work reflects a mature, programmatic research agenda highly relevant to the future of academic ophthalmology and retinal care delivery.

Equally impressive is the personal foundation that informs Dr. Franco's academic trajectory. Raised in a rural, medically underserved community by immigrant parents, he brings authenticity, clarity of purpose, and deep insight to his scholarly work. His goal of becoming an academic vitreoretinal surgeon who integrates clinical excellence, impactful health services research, and mentorship of underrepresented trainees is exceptionally well-defined and entirely consistent with his accomplishments to date.



Beyond research, Dr. Franco is a natural leader and mentor. Since beginning residency, he has directly mentored seven medical students and two junior residents, providing guidance on clinical development, research projects, and career planning. He contributes actively to resident wellbeing initiatives and program development and is consistently generous with his time and insight. Dr. Franco is widely respected by peers and faculty alike for his professionalism, humility, and collaborative spirit, and he has a remarkable ability to elevate those around him through thoughtful mentorship and inclusive leadership.

Dr. Franco embodies the mission of the Heed Foundation. He is intellectually rigorous, purpose-driven, and deeply committed to advancing academic ophthalmology in a way that meaningfully improves patient care and equity. We are confident that he will both benefit from and contribute to the Heed Residents Retreat, and that early engagement with the Heed community will further support his development as an academic leader in ophthalmology.

We recommend him without reservation. We also confirm that if University of Michigan is fortunate enough to have two residents accepted to attend the Heed Retreat, we will fund one of the residents to attend. Please feel free to contact us with any questions.

Sincerely,

Ariane Kaplan, MD
Clinical Associate Professor,
Residency Program Director
Ophthalmology and Visual Sciences
University of Michigan

Sincerely,

Shahzad I. Mian, M.D.
F. Bruce Fralick Professor of Ophthalmology
Chair and Professor, Ophthalmology and Visual Sciences
Director, Kellogg Eye Center
University of Michigan