



April 27, 2026

**Re: Andrew Boal**

Dear Heed Ophthalmic Foundation Selection Committee,

We are pleased to provide my enthusiastic recommendation for Dr. Andrew Boal for participation in the 20<sup>th</sup> Annual Heed Residents Retreat. Dr. Boal is currently an ophthalmology resident at the University of Michigan Kellogg Eye Center and exemplifies the caliber of trainee the Heed program was designed to support. He exhibits exceptional preparation, intellectual depth, and a clear commitment to a career in academic ophthalmology.

Dr. Boal completed an MD/PhD through the Vanderbilt Medical Scientist Training Program, with a PhD in neuroscience focused on retinal ganglion cell physiology and glaucomatous neurodegeneration. His graduate work reflects a sophisticated, mechanism-driven approach to translational science and resulted in numerous peer-reviewed publications as well as presentations at national and international meetings. His training provided him with deep expertise in experimental design and execution, including development of transgenic mouse models, single-cell electrophysiology, immunohistochemistry, and computational analysis of large datasets. His work was supported by both institutional training support and an individually awarded F30 Fellowship from the National Eye Institute, underscoring both its quality and his early independence as an investigator.

Importantly, Dr. Boal has continued to build a coherent and forward-looking research program during residency. He is currently working with Dr. David Antonetti to analyze RNA sequencing data from a mouse model of diabetic retinopathy, with a focus on how diabetes-associated disruption of the blood-retinal barrier alters neuron-glia interactions in the retina. This work is explicitly designed to generate testable hypotheses that will inform targeted *in vivo* and *in vitro* experimentation during his dedicated research time later in residency. His ability to identify clinically relevant scientific questions and pursue them using contemporary, rigorous approaches speaks to his readiness for a sustained career as a clinician-scientist in ophthalmology.

Dr. Boal's research accomplishments are complemented by a strong record of leadership, mentorship, and service. During his graduate training, he held leadership positions within both the Neuroscience Graduate Program and the MSTP, contributing meaningfully to trainee advocacy, wellness initiatives, and program development. He has consistently demonstrated a commitment to teaching and mentorship of junior trainees, which are qualities that are essential for success in academic medicine.

Clinically, Dr. Boal is thoughtful, detail-oriented, and highly motivated. He approaches patient care with the same analytical rigor that characterizes his scientific work, while maintaining excellent professionalism and interpersonal skills. He has matured into a confident and capable young ophthalmologist and is widely respected by faculty and peers alike. His clinical development, coupled with his scholarly trajectory, clearly aligns with a future as a physician-scientist and academic leader in ophthalmology.

Taken together, Dr. Boal's depth of scientific training, ongoing investigative work, leadership, and deliberate pursuit of an academic career path make him an outstanding candidate for the Heed Residents Retreat. We are confident that he will both benefit from and contribute meaningfully to this



experience, and that early engagement with the Heed community will further support his transition to independence as an academic ophthalmologist.

We recommend him without reservation. We also confirm that if the University of Michigan is fortunate enough to have two residents accepted to attend the Heed Residents Retreat, we will fully fund one of the residents to attend. Please do not hesitate to contact us if additional information would be helpful.

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