



April 28, 2026

**Dear Members of the Heed Ophthalmic Foundation Resident's Retreat Committee,**

We are writing this letter to enthusiastically recommend Dr. David Zhang for the Heed Resident's Retreat. We, the program directors of the Vanderbilt Eye Institute Residency Program, have had the pleasure of supervising David since his PGY-1 year at the Vanderbilt University Medical Center, where he has worked closely with us in both the clinic and the operating room. In every setting, he has distinguished himself as an exceptionally capable and motivated physician across the clinical, educational, and research domains.

A native of the Chicago suburbs, David has a strong pedigree and has excelled at each step throughout his career. As an undergraduate at the University of Illinois at Chicago, he graduated *summa cum laude* in only three years with a double major in Biology (B.S.) and Psychology (B.A.), a minor in Chemistry, and induction to Phi Beta Kappa. He was a member of the Guaranteed Professional Program Admission in Medicine and received a Merit Tuition Scholarship to obtain his MD at the Feinberg School of Medicine at Northwestern University. We were lucky to have him join our residency program in 2023 as a PGY-1 Surgical Intern and continue as our resident.

From the first day of his rotations, David demonstrated an extraordinary fund of knowledge and clinical maturity, well beyond what one would typically expect even of a PGY-1 resident. In between his undergraduate and medical school tenures, David spent one year as an Ophthalmic Technician at the Retina Consultants in Des Plaines, IL. Four years later, David was able to behave as if he had walked out of the clinic just a week prior, performing careful slit lamp and indirect ophthalmoscopy examinations, interpreting ophthalmic and retinal imaging thoughtfully, and presenting patients clearly and concisely.

However, David's commitment to excellence did not stop there. It would be easy to start ahead and then stagnate while waiting for his co-residents to catch up – but that is not what happened. David continued to work hard day in and day out, rapidly progressing and refining his examination skills and ability to detect subtle findings and craft nuanced assessments, demonstrating both intellectual curiosity and eminent teachability in each ophthalmic concentration. His surgical skills have been described by several faculty as “best I've seen”.

Academically, David has performed at an above average level on the Ophthalmic Knowledge Assessment Program examinations (OKAPs) and has been engaged in contributing scientifically since 2016. This is evidenced by his many publications, book chapters, and abstract presentations, as well as travel grant support to present his findings



for eight of the last ten years. In fact, since residency started, David has co-authored five manuscripts, three published articles, and eight oral presentations at local, national, and international scientific meetings and symposia. Don't just take it from us; in the words of one of his research mentors, Dr. Avni Finn, she describes David as: *"...diligent, conscientious, thorough – always dependable and follows through. He is very sharp and able to think through scientific questions, present with clarity, and is well on his way to building a solid foundation in clinical research."*

In summary, we give Dr. David Zhang our highest recommendation for the Heed Resident's Retreat. He is knowledgeable, professional, compassionate, focused, and deeply committed to excelling at an academic career. He represents the very best of what we value and strive to support as a leader at Vanderbilt. We are confident that he will be an asset to your retreat and will go on to make significant academic and professional contributions to our field.

Please do not hesitate to contact us if we can provide further insight into his outstanding qualities.

Sincerely,

**Reid Longmuir, MD**

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