

FALLING

WALLS

LAB

NEW ZEALAND

Aotearoa New Zealand

TUESDAY 5 MAHURU SEPTEMBER 2023

ROYAL SOCIETY TE APĀRANGI

HŌTAKA PROGRAMME

- 9.30** Arrival and registration for presenters
- 10.30** Presenters briefing
- 11.00** Jury briefing
- 11.30** Mihi welcome and introductory remarks
- 11.45** Pitch presentations (1-11)
- 12.45** Kai a te rānui lunch
- 1.45** Pitch presentations (12-22)
- 2.45** Networking break / Kaiwhakawā Jury evaluation session
- 3.45** Award ceremony / Group photo and closing remarks
- 4.15** Networking and connecting reception
- 6.00** Karakia whakamutunga event closing blessing

KAUPAPA CONCEPT

WHICH ARE
THE NEXT
WALLS
TO FALL?

The Falling Walls Foundation founded the Falling Walls Lab in 2011 to:

CONNECT aspiring innovators

DISCOVER and develop talents

SUPPORT interdisciplinary dialogue and international cooperation

DEVELOP new ways of scientific communication

BUILD new and strong networks

KAIWHAKAWĀ JURY



Professor Phil Lester Jury Chair

**Insect Ecology, School of Biological Sciences,
Te Herenga Waka – Victoria University of Wellington**

Professor Lester works at Te Herenga Waka – Victoria University of Wellington, where his research is in population dynamics and ecology of social insects. The pathogens and parasites of honey bees, invasive ants and social wasps in the Pacific region are a particular focus. He is a Specialty Chief Editor for the journal *Frontiers in Bee Science*. Phil has been the recipient of both a Fulbright Senior Scholar Fellowship and a Royal Society Te Apārangi James Cook Fellowship. He has previously been Head of School for the School of Biological Sciences, and is a prior President of the Entomological Society of New Zealand.



Associate Professor Riz Firestone

**Associate Professor/Senior Research Officer,
Research Centre for Hauora and Health,
Massey University**

Associate Professor Firestone is a Senior Researcher at Research Centre for Hauora and Health. Her research involves investigations on social-cultural and health inequalities specifically among young Pasifika people with non-communicable diseases in Aotearoa New Zealand. She also has a wider focus in co-developing community-based interventions with Pasifika and Māori communities to: (i) tailor interventions to ensure the needs of the community are met and; (ii) ensure the interventions are relevant, and adaptable for long-term uptake by people within their communities.

Outside of academic life, Riz has a passion for empowering others in healthier lifestyles through her pro-hobby group fitness career at one of Aotearoa New Zealand's largest gyms, teaching Group Power classes (she is the Head Teacher for this programme), where she enjoys empowering people from all walks of life into healthier lifestyles.



Associate Professor Alex Gavryushkin

**Biological Data Science Lab,
School of Mathematics and Statistics,
University of Canterbury**

Associate Professor Gavryushkin, Rutherford Discovery Fellow, is an expert in algorithms, biological data science, and genomics working on scalable approaches to big data analysis in cancer research, epidemiology, and drug discovery.



Chris Karamea Insley

Chair/Executive Director, Te Arawa Fisheries Group and Chair, Te Taumata (advancing Māori business interests in Free Trade Agreements)

Chris Karamea Insley was born and raised with his koroua and kuia on the East Coast in Te Whānau ā Apanui, Ōmāio. He grew up on a small dairy farm working on the land and entrenched in Te Reo and Māori tikanga. Today he works and navigates seamlessly between taha Māori and the world of Pākehā commerce and government, at home and internationally.

With Degrees and Masters in Commerce/ Finance and Business Administration from Massey University and the University of Waikato respectively, Chris also studied Getting Global Strategy Right and International Finance through Harvard Business School Executive Education.

Chris has extensive experience in technical, management, executive leadership and governance in a variety of industries in New Zealand, and internationally in private, public and Māori-owned and led businesses. In 2021, he was a member of the APEC Business Leadership Group.



Veronika Meduna

New Zealand Editor, The Conversation

Veronika Meduna is the New Zealand editor for *The Conversation*, a not-for-profit media organisation working with academics to provide evidence-based news and current affairs analysis. She is an award-winning science/ environment writer and broadcaster, with experience across all multi-media publishing platforms. Before joining *The Conversation*, she produced and hosted a weekly science programme for New Zealand's public broadcaster RNZ, for which she won several journalism awards, including the Asia-Pacific Broadcasting Union's prize for best documentary.

She has written several books on science, most recently *Towards a Warming World*, published by Bridget Williams Books, and *Science on Ice: Discovering the Secrets of Antarctica*, published by Auckland University Press and, in an international edition, by Yale University Press. This book was a finalist in the 2013 Science Book awards.

Veronika contributes to other broadcasters and publications in New Zealand and internationally, including the *NZ Listener*, *NZ Geographic*, *New Scientist* and *Deutsche Welle*.



Monique Surges

**CEO, German-New Zealand
Chamber of Commerce (GNZCC)**

Monique Surges is a seasoned CEO who has been leading the German New Zealand Chamber of Commerce since 2000. In 2015, she also joined the Supervisory Board of BayWa AG. She has also been instrumental in the establishment and growth of the New Zealand Europe Business Council, where she held several leadership roles including Vice President, President, and Treasurer.

Monique brings extensive expertise in facilitating and nurturing business relationships between New Zealand and Germany. Her hands-on approach has been invaluable in assisting companies with their exhibition needs at various international trade fairs in Germany. Over her impressive 30-year career, she has been a key driver in cultivating a thriving trade relationship between these two countries.

With its mandate to help New Zealand and German business entities thrive in an increasingly competitive global market environment, the GNZCC is a uniquely positioned bilateral trade office. It is supported by the German Federal Ministry of Economics and Climate Action and is the largest European Chamber in New Zealand.

SCORING SYSTEM

Each presentation is evaluated on a scale from 0 – 5 (lowest to highest) based on three weighted criteria.

50% | Breakthrough factor

- Is the project original and does it have potential for innovation?
- Does it represent a groundbreaking idea, initiative or discovery?
- Could it trigger other innovation processes?

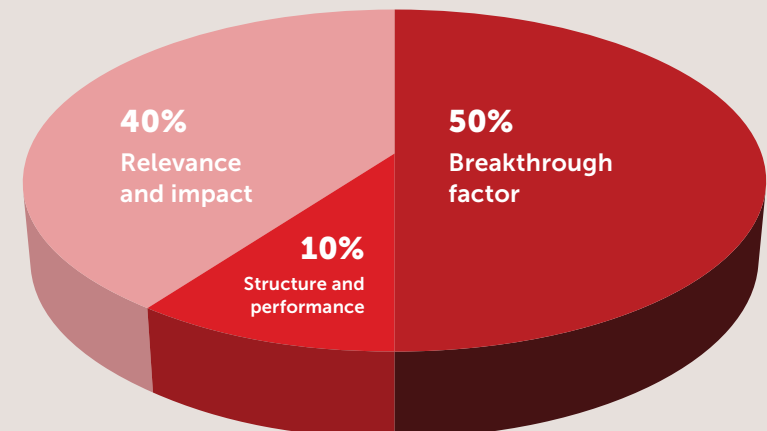
10% | Structure and performance

- Is the presentation well structured? Does it clearly explain breakthrough and impact?
- Does the candidate present a proof of concept / the feasibility of the project?
- Is the candidate able to explain the idea well?

40% | Relevance and impact

- Who is the target group?
- Does the idea affect a broad group or does it have a deep impact on a small group?
- Does the idea have short-term or long-term effects?

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KAIWHAKATAETAE PARTICIPANTS

Order of presentations

1. **Ashlee Berryman**
University of Otago
2. **Benjamin Durán-Vinet**
University of Otago
3. **Brittany Park**
The University of Auckland
4. **Bryann Avendano**
University of Canterbury
5. **Christopher Erwin**
Auckland University of Technology
6. **Debashree Roy**
Riddet Institute, Massey University
7. **Emily O’Riordan**
Bodeker Scientific
8. **Jihwi Jang**
University of Canterbury
9. **Jildou van der Werf**
University of Otago
10. **Kristin Bohm**
Institute of Environmental
Science and Research Ltd
11. **Krzysztof Maliszewski**
University of Canterbury

12. **Lysea Haggie**
The University of Auckland
13. **Matthew French**
The University of Auckland
14. **Max Dang Vu**
The University of Auckland
15. **Morehu McDonald**
Te Wānanga o Aotearoa
16. **Reeha Sharma**
University of the South Pacific
17. **Robyn May**
The University of Auckland
18. **Savindi Wijenayaka**
The University of Auckland
19. **Shallu Verma**
University of Canterbury
20. **Sherry Feng**
Auckland University of Technology
21. **Tejesvi Patel**
University of the South Pacific
22. **Vitor Geniselli da Silva**
Riddet Institute, Massey University

1.

Ashlee Berryman
University of Otago



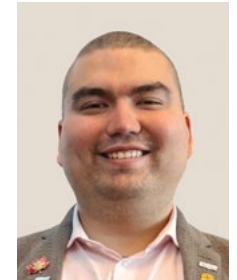
Breaking the Wall of Endometriosis

Ashlee is a PhD candidate from University of Otago whose research interests include neuropsychology and biopsychology in women's health, and statistical concepts in psychological research. Her previous research has focused on the maintenance of oxygenated haemoglobin after exercise and its relationship to task switching ability among healthy young adults. Her current research aims to advance understanding and improve holistic wellbeing of women suffering with endometriosis and associated chronic pelvic pain through scientific exploration and evidence-based practices.

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2.

Benjamín Durán-Vinet
University of Otago



Breaking the Wall of Marine Biomonitoring

Benjamín Durán-Vinet, a biotechnologist from Chile. His academic journey began with a Bachelor's and Honours in Biotechnology in his homeland, where he engaged early in diverse applied science research projects. In 2017, a scholarship from the Canadian Government led him to the University of Regina, where he discovered his fascination for diverse CRISPR-Cas systems. Back in Chile, Ben collaborated with Dr Susie Wood on his first project as a brand-new leader, exploring CRISPR-Cas13a systems as a potential biomonitoring tool for harmful algal blooms. Now pursuing a PhD in Genetics at the University of Otago, guided by respected mentors Dr Neil Gemmell, Dr Anastasija Zaiko, and Dr Xavier Pochon, Ben aims to push further, integrating CRISPR-Cas13a, artificial intelligence, and graphene chips for next-gen marine biomonitoring through the Marine Biosecurity Toolbox in New Zealand.

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3.


Brittany Park

The University of Auckland

**Breaking the Wall of Elderly Surgical Recovery**

Dr Brittany Park is a surgical research fellow employed by the University of Auckland. She is in her second year of a full time PhD focusing on older patients undergoing emergency general surgery. She aspires towards a career in academic surgery. She was awarded the Douglas Goodfellow Medical Research Fellowship through the Auckland Medical Research Foundation as a salary support to pursue this research full time. She has 10 publications and 12 refereed conference proceedings in general surgery.

The motivation to work with older patients following emergency surgery came from her time as a medical student (where she was the president of the Auckland University Surgical Society) and 2 years spent working as a doctor at Middlemore Hospital. Seeing the impacts for these patients following major surgery was eye opening and inspired this project.

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4.

Bryann Avendano

University of Canterbury

**Breaking the Wall of Resilience Planning**

PhD candidate Bryann is a humanitarian engineer and scientist committed to bridging the gap between policymakers and scientists by facilitating evidence-driven decision-making and planning processes that collaboratively shape a resilient future. Bryann has a multidisciplinary background, two honours bachelor's degrees in science, a postgraduate diploma in business and leadership, postgraduate studies in statistics and modelling, and doctoral studies in civil and natural resources engineering.

Bryann understands the importance of leveraging scientific information using modelling tools that non-scientific people can use and interact. Over the past eight years, he developed a proven track record, by working with local governments and underrepresented communities in Latin America, tackling various challenges related to climate change adaptation and environmental planning.

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5.

Christopher Erwin

Auckland University of Technology

**Breaking the Wall of Quantitative Intersectionality**

Dr Christopher Erwin is an economist, critical race scholar, and lecturer at Auckland University of Technology (AUT). As an applied microeconomist, his research focuses on the role of cognitive skills in the migrant worker wage assimilation process, the effects of financial aid on student success in college, and strategies to narrow the income gap in college graduation.

As a critical race scholar, Erwin's research focuses on quantitative intersectional methods aimed at capturing experiences of inequity for individuals living with multiple forms of marginalisation. He teaches undergraduate and graduate economics courses at AUT.

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6.

Debashree Roy

Riddet Institute, Massey University

**Breaking the Wall of Plant-based Cheeses**

Debashree is a postdoctoral fellow with Riddet Institute. She has a strong background in food technology with interdisciplinary research and development expertise in the field of dairy science, plant science, and human digestion. In her current role, she is also leading the development of novel technologies to design structurally and nutritionally superior plant-based future foods.

She was one of the recipients of 2022 International Peter Walstra Science Award and International Dairy Federation's Pavel Jelen Early Career Scientist Award. She has a passion for transferring scientific excellence into commercial outcomes, so loves being at the forefront of conducting fundamental science-based research involving both academia and industries. She received her PhD (Food Technology) from Massey University (New Zealand) and obtained her MSc (Food Technology) and BSc (Honours, Agriculture) from India.

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7.

Emily O'Riordan

Bodeker Scientific

**Breaking the Wall of Extreme Weather Forecasting**

Dr Emily O'Riordan is a postdoctoral researcher with Bodeker Scientific, a climate and weather research organisation based in Otago. She is investigating how artificial intelligence may be used to improve both the accuracy and cost of producing high-resolution forecasts over Aotearoa New Zealand. Her research encompasses neural network architecture, numerical weather prediction and the impact of more detailed weather forecasts on vulnerable communities. This project works closely with meteorologists at MetService and other climate scientists both domestically and internationally.

She recently received her PhD from Cardiff University's School of Mathematics, where she studied measures of proximity and decorrelation for high dimensional data. Her PhD project produced several new data science methods, suitable for applications across a variety of disciplines.

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8.

Jihwi Jang

University of Canterbury

**Breaking the Wall of Nitrate Removal via Tree**

Jihwi Jang is a PhD student in Biology, from the University of Canterbury. His research interest lies in the role of trees, and their responses to abiotic stress (such as drought, salinity, or temperature) in relation to the impact of human activities. His current research covers trees' antioxidative metabolism and phytoremediation on anthropogenic nitrate contamination, which he researches through monitoring the removal efficiency from contaminated water in the New Zealand environment (i.e. agricultural areas, streams, and rivers).

He has over five years of research experience in forest biology, and has had 16 published peer-reviewed research papers in SCI-listed journals, including five first-author publications in *Biomass and Bioenergy* (IF 3.5; 2017), *Photosynthetica* (IF 1.5; 2018), *Sustainability* (IF 2.5; 2020), *Land* (IF 3.3; 2022) and *Urban Science* (2022) amongst other publications.

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9.


Jildou van der Werf

University of Otago

**Breaking the Wall of Personalised Cancer Treatment**

I am from the Netherlands, and have always missed out on mountains! So, when during my Bachelor of Science degree I was allowed to do research abroad, I jumped at the chance to come to New Zealand. First, I studied in Auckland looking at how exercise improves health. Then, I moved to Dunedin to study how our genetics link obesity and cancer. This won me a prestigious award in 2021 called the Golden Spatula, a prize for best BSc Report in the Netherlands, which in turn helped me win a University of Otago PhD Scholarship. I am now halfway through my PhD, studying how a specific genetic variation alters our response to treatments for cancer and inflammatory bowel disease. But more importantly, I get to climb some beautiful mountains.

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10.


Kristin Bohm

Institute of Environmental Science and Research Ltd

**Breaking the Wall of Wasting Our Waste**

Dr Kristin Bohm is an Environmental Scientist at the Institute of Environmental Science and Research Ltd. (ESR). Before she came to New Zealand in 2019, she worked for a small start-up company in Germany developing novel microbial biofertilizers. In 2018, Kristin finished her PhD at the Netherlands Institute of Ecology at the Department of Microbial Ecology. At her current position she is applying her knowledge in microbial ecology and environmental sciences to find solutions to sustainably manage organic waste. Currently, Kristin is leading the research at ESR around using insects like Black Soldier Fly to bioconvert organic waste such as sewage sludge into high-value products. Her research can contribute to the establishment of circular economies to minimize and valorise organic waste which current management is causing environmental and social problems.

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 scholar.google.co.nz/citations?user=nWzwThoAAAAJ&hl=en

11.

Krzysztof Maliszewski

Auckland University of Technology

**Breaking the Wall of Medical Imaging Limits**

Originally from Poland, Krzysztof Maliszewski is a software developer with over 10 years of experience across diverse sectors, who has spent the past seven years residing in New Zealand. Currently pursuing a PhD at the University of Canterbury, Krzysztof is dedicated to exploring the potential of machine learning and artificial intelligence to enhance human lives and well-being. Alongside his wife, he works on advancing optical coherence tomography (OCT) devices to provide higher-definition images, offering hope for more effective diagnostics and earlier treatments for individuals facing visual impairments, diabetes, and even cancer – all conditions that OCT can detect.

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12.


Lysea Haggie

The University of Auckland



Breaking the Wall of Brain and Body

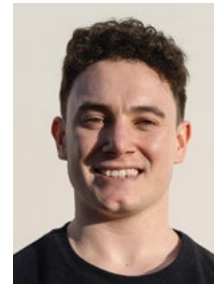
Lysea is a recently submitted PhD student at the Auckland Bioengineering Institute, at the University of Auckland. Her work focuses on computational modelling of neural control for the human motor system, a collaboration with New Zealand artificial intelligence company Soul Machines. Lysea completed her conjoint degree in Engineering and Science in 2017, majoring in Biomedical Engineering, Psychology and Sport & Exercise Science. Following graduation, she was a part of the Ako Mātātupu Teach First NZ programme and worked as a Maths teacher at Tamaki College. She has also worked with various outreach programmes and is passionate about representation in STEM. After spending this year in Wānaka, she has fallen in love with the mountains and skiing. She also enjoys being a bookworm, water baby, food critic and loving wife.

 @lysea_munoz

13.

Matthew French

The University of Auckland



Breaking the Wall of Breast Cancer Treatment

Matthew French, a PhD candidate at the Auckland Bioengineering Institute (ABI) at the University of Auckland, discovered his passion for bioengineering while working at leading health and deep tech start-ups in New Zealand, Soul Machines and HeartLab. He holds a mathematics and physics degree from the University of Canterbury, where he has been awarded scholarships for excellence in mathematics.

His interest in bioengineering led him to pursue a Master of Bioengineering in the Breast Biomechanics Research group at ABI, developing a cutting-edge deep learning approach for medical image registration in collaboration with the Martinos Center at MIT in the USA. In his PhD, he will spearhead the integration of physical laws into deep neural networks to address more complex registration problems and discover material properties of biological tissues. As an application, such an integrated approach will be suitable for mapping breast tissue between diagnostic and pre-operative positions, which is clinically relevant for breast cancer treatment planning.

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 scholar.google.com/citations?user=CgZ_K-0AAAAJ&hl=en

14.

Minh Chau (Max)
Dang Vui

The University of Auckland



Breaking the Wall of Breast Cancer Visualisation

Kia ora! My name is Max, and I am from Mangere, Auckland. I completed my undergraduate degree (1st Class Honours) in Biomedical Engineering at the University of Auckland in 2021. My honours project exposed me to the vast computational tools used in modelling the human body, and the translational impact of this research towards improving healthcare practices. This experience inspired me to undertake a PhD with the Breast Biomechanics Research Group at the Auckland Bioengineering Institute. My project aims to develop a physics-driven augmented reality visualisation platform that helps clinicians visualise breast tumours accurately yet efficiently during cancer diagnosis and treatment procedures. In my spare time I like to read, watch sports, and do karate!

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15.

Morehu McDonald

Te Wānanga o Aotearoa

**Breaking the Wall of Genocide and Colonialism**

Dr Morehu McDonald is the Kairangahau Matua of the newly established Te Manawahoukura Centre of Rangahau excellence by Te Wānanga o Aotearoa. One of the centre's aims is to develop innovative solutions and new forms of knowledge to overcome the negative effects of colonialism that have impacted Māori and other Indigenous Peoples throughout the world.

Morehu has a PhD in Indigenous Studies (2018) from Te Whare Wānanga o Awanuiārangi. He was awarded the Emeritus Professor Roger Green ONZM Top Thesis Award. Morehu holds a Master of Arts (Hons) degree in New Zealand History from Auckland University. Morehu has worked as a Treaty claims historian for the Waitangi Tribunal.

Morehu has teaching and senior management leadership experience in adult and primary education and Māori health. He also has extensive experience and knowledge in communications, public relations, television production and journalism.

16.

Reeha Sharma

University of the South Pacific, Fiji

**Breaking the Wall of Plastic Based Pollution**

Bula, my name is Reeha Rishika Sharma and I originally hail from the hidden paradise of Fiji known as Savusavu. Currently, I am pursuing my Masters in Chemistry in the area of Polymer Science at the University of the South Pacific, Fiji, under the supervision of Dr David Rohindra. My research area is based on the development of a bioplastic using cassava starch which is a crop that is locally available. This will help to combat the issue of plastic pollution as starch is a natural polymer. My interest is to carry out research on new things which will be beneficial for people and the environment. Lastly, I like networking with people and discuss ideas in potential research areas to enhance my knowledge.


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17.

Robyn May

The University of Auckland

**Breaking the Wall of Newborn Digital Twins**

Dr Robyn May trained as a medical doctor, and since her first clinical rotation in paediatrics, she has been passionate about children's health. She has explored various interests – from clinical practice in South Africa to an MPhil in Biomedical Ethics, to Biomedical Engineering at the University of Cape Town, to three years in maternal and perinatal clinical research at the Liggins Institute, University of Auckland. Her current doctoral research project brings together her two passions of paediatrics and bioengineering.

Her PhD project at the University of Auckland aimed to develop newborn digital twins: physics-based computational models of the cardiovascular system for newborns. These personalisable models can aid decision-making in the acute perinatal care setting and investigate differences in those born preterm that might predispose them to cardiovascular disease later in life.


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18.

Savindi Wijenayaka

The University of Auckland

**Breaking the Wall of Gut Microstructures**

Savindi Wijenayaka has a background in Computer Science and Software Engineering, focusing on Data Science and Machine Learning, combined with an experience in production-grade cloud-native application development. She completed her BSc (Hons) in 2020 at the University of Kelaniya (Sri Lanka) and began her career as a Machine Learning Engineer in WSO2. She later joined the Gastrointestinal Research Group of the Auckland Bioengineering Institute as a PhD candidate, as she wishes to utilise her computer science background in the Healthcare domain in the future.

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19.

Shallu Verma

University of Canterbury

**Breaking the Wall of Illicit Drugs Analysis**

My name is Shallu Verma, and I am a PhD student at the University of Canterbury. I like reading books and blogging about my experiences and insights. I am a dedicated person who is pursuing my goal of serving society. Fortunately, I was chosen for a PhD position for the project "Benchtop NMR [nuclear magnetic resonance] Analysis of Illicit Drugs," in which we are attempting to develop a method that will aid in reducing the harm caused by drug usage in society. I am also a co-founder of the Grab A PhD (Gap) initiative, which assists students in pursuing their PhD overseas dreams. Associated with like-minded individuals, I strive to contribute meaningfully to both academia and society as I work diligently toward the culmination of my doctoral journey.

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20.

Sherry Feng

Auckland University of Technology

**Breaking the Wall of Bias in AI**

Sherry Feng, a PhD student at Auckland University of Technology (AUT), specializes in artificial intelligence (AI), particularly in Natural Language Processing (NLP). Her research is inspired by previous work experiences. She aims to make impactful contributions by addressing real-world challenges through the use of AI.

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21.

Tejesvi Patel

University of the South Pacific, Fiji

**Breaking the Wall of Infection Using PVP/TA**

I am Tejesvi Patel, and I hail from Suva, Fiji. I am currently in the final stages of completing my Masters in Chemistry specializing in Polymer Science at the University of the South Pacific, Fiji. Under the supervision of Dr David Rohindra, my research focuses on modifying biocompatible polymers to tackle pressing issues such as microbial wound infections and microplastics remediation from water. I have aspirations of pursuing a PhD in the future and an event such as this is a great opportunity to meet likeminded individuals that will undoubtedly serve as a source of motivation and encouragement for my future academic endeavours. I hope to contribute to the field of polymer science and make a positive impact on healthcare and environmental challenges.

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22.

Vitor Geniselli da Silva

Riddet Institute, Massey University

**Breaking the Wall of the Infant Microbiome**

Vitor received his BSc in Food Engineering (University of Campinas, Brazil) and a Master's in Biotechnology Engineering (AgroParisTech, France) through a dual degree programme. During his training, he carried out internships in research laboratories and the R&D sector of start-up companies, particularly in the areas of biochemistry and genetic engineering. Vitor came to New Zealand for his PhD, which uses mathematical models, in vitro digestion, and anaerobic fermentation to investigate the relationship between foods and the microbes colonising the large intestine of weaning infants.

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KŌRERO MAI FEEDBACK

- What is your overall impression of the Falling Walls Lab Aotearoa New Zealand?
- What are your concrete suggestions for improvement?
- What was most challenging?

Please provide your feedback to:
International.applications@royalsociety.org.nz

ROYAL SOCIETY **TE APĀRANGI**

KAITAUTOKO PARTNERS

In corporation with

Falling Walls Lab Aotearoa New Zealand is hosted by Royal Society Te Apārangi with support from the German Embassy in Wellington, the Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment Catalyst: Leaders Fund, and EURAXESS Australia & New Zealand.



Ngā mihi thank you partners and supporters of Falling Walls Lab Berlin

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In Zusammenarbeit mit:








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