

FALLING WALLS FOUNDATION

10.11.2025

THE FALLING WALLS FOUNDATION ANNOUNCES BREAKTHROUGHS OF THE YEAR 2025 FOR FALLING WALLS ENGAGE, FALLING WALLS LAB AND FALLING WALLS VENTURE

Falling Walls Foundation announces the Breakthroughs of the Year for its programmes as Falling Walls Engage, Falling Walls Lab (Science Engagement) and Falling Walls Venture:

- Nondas Ferreira da Silva is awarded the Falling Walls Breakthrough of the Year of Falling Walls Engage.
- Karen de la Vega-Hernández is awarded first place in the Falling Walls Breakthrough of the Year competition of Falling Walls Lab.
Elena Barba Sarasua is awarded second place in the Falling Walls Breakthrough of the Year competition of Falling Walls Lab.
Harry Wilton-Clark is awarded third place in the Falling Walls Breakthrough of the Year competition of Falling Walls Lab.
- LUMAI, presented by James Spall, is awarded the Falling Walls Breakthrough of the Year of Falling Walls Venture.

The topics of the 2025 Breakthroughs of the Year range from the restoration of ecosystems with the aid of indigenous knowledge, the editing of late stage molecule editing in drugs, the engineering of T-cells for immunotherapy against cancer, the use of new molecules to conceal mutations that cause rare diseases and the development of a processor that reduces energy cost for AI computing.

Berlin, Germany, 10 November 2025. The Falling Walls Foundation proudly announces the Breakthroughs of the Year for its programmes **Falling Walls Engage**, **Falling Walls Lab** and **Falling Walls Venture**.

Falling Walls Engage announces as Falling Walls Breakthrough of the Year:

Nondas Ferreira da Silva, BR

Breaking the Wall of Restoration with Indigenous Knowledge

“Seeds of Change” is a community-driven initiative that empowers traditional communities and indigenous Xacriabá people to restore degraded ecosystems in Brazil’s Cerrado biome. By integrating agroforestry, citizen science and sustainable economic models, the project enhances climate resilience and biodiversity conservation. Through hands-on training, participatory research and local partnerships, the project bridges science and community action to create environmental and social impact.

Falling Walls Lab announces as Falling Walls Breakthroughs of the Year:

1st Place:

Karen de la Vega-Hernández

Breaking the Wall of Molecular Monotony

Institute of Chemical Research of Catalonia, Spain

Karen de la Vega-Hernández has developed a novel reagent and skeletal editing strategy that enable the structural and functional diversification of drug molecules at late stages. This breakthrough accelerates drug

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discovery, allowing rapid and sustainable modification of molecular cores to create new and improved therapeutic candidates.

2nd Place:

Elena Barba Sarasua

Breaking the Wall of Solid Tumor Shields

Complutense University of Madrid, Spain

Elena Barba Sarasua's STAb-T platform redefines cancer immunotherapy by engineering T cells to secrete bispecific antibodies that recruit and activate immune cells against solid tumors. Her research opens the door to multi-targeted, scalable treatments for cancers that are currently difficult to treat.

3rd Place:

Harry Wilton-Clark

Breaking the Wall of Rare Disease Therapies

University of Alberta, Canada

Harry Wilton-Clark has designed small molecules that act as genetic "band-aids," concealing disease-causing mutations to restore healthy gene expression. Collaborating with a young patient with Duchenne muscular dystrophy, his work represents a significant step forward in precision medicine and the development of patient-specific therapies for rare diseases.

Falling Walls Venture announces as Falling Walls Breakthrough of the Year in the ScienStart-Up category:

LUMAI, presented by James Spall

Breaking the Wall of Inefficient AI-Computation

Lumai's energy-efficient, high-performance compute hardware will forerun AI models at scale. Empowered by their optical computing technology, Lumai's AI processor will dramatically reduce the cost and energy required to deploy AI across all industries.

The Falling Walls Foundation congratulates all Breakthroughs of the Year for their contributions to the Falling Walls Science Summit 2025.

Interviews with our Breakthroughs of the Year can be requested via press@fallingwalls.com.

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About the Falling Walls Science Summit

Since its inception in **2009**, the **Falling Walls Science Summit** has become a premier international forum for scientific breakthroughs and interdisciplinary dialogue. Held annually in **Berlin from 6 – 9 November**, the **Science**

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Summit commemorates the fall of the Berlin Wall by bringing together global leaders to explore how science can shape a sustainable future.

With its key formats—**Falling Walls Pitches**, **Falling Walls Circle** and **Falling Walls Science Breakthroughs**—the Summit fosters collaboration among academia, industry, politics and civil society to drive transformative change. The event is organized by the **non-profit Falling Walls Foundation**. More information: falling-walls.com.

About the Falling Walls Foundation

The **Falling Walls Foundation gGmbH** is a Berlin-based non-profit organization dedicated to advancing science communication and public engagement with research. Its initiatives bring together international experts to develop breakthrough solutions for global challenges.

Alongside the **Falling Walls Science Summit**, the Foundation runs the **Berlin Science Week**, as well as specialized programmes such as **Falling Walls Lab**, **Falling Walls Engage**, **Falling Walls Venture** and **Female Science Talents** and **Young Entrepreneurs in Science**. Since **2020**, the Foundation has also organized the **Creative Bureaucracy Festival**, an international platform for public sector innovation.

The Foundation is supported by the **German Federal Ministry of Research, Technology and Space**, the **Berlin Senate**, the **Hannover Re Foundation**, the **Museum for Natural History, Berlin**, **PD – Public Sector Advisory**, **Volkswagen Foundation** and more than 100 additional international philanthropies, academic institutions, companies and NGOs. Learn more: <https://falling-walls.com/foundation>.