

AGENTS OF CHANGE JUDGING PANEL

Meet the team judging the Agents of Change grant award nominations. The judging panel evaluates proposals based on the following criteria:

- What the initiative intends to achieve and what it has achieved so far (if applicable)
- How the award money would help to support the initiative
- The data sources used to identify the need for the initiative, and the data sources that will be used to evaluate the initiative
- How the project will continue beyond the initial grant
- The potential impact of the initiative and why the grant of the award would be significant for the initiative

ORLANDO ROJAS



Professor Orlando Rojas is a globally recognized materials scientist and engineer specializing in biobased materials, renewable nanomaterials, colloids, and sustainable technologies. He serves as a Canada Excellence Research Chair in Bioproducts and is the Scientific Director of the Bioproducts Institute at the University of British Columbia, with appointments in Chemical & Biological Engineering, Chemistry, and Wood Science.

Born in Venezuela, Professor Rojas earned degrees from institutions in Venezuela and Spain, completed his Ph.D. at Auburn University, and conducted postdoctoral research at KTH Royal Institute of Technology. Before joining UBC, he held leadership roles at Aalto University and helped lead Finland's national bioeconomy initiatives.

His research focuses on developing sustainable materials from renewable resources such as cellulose, lignin, chitin, proteins, and other biomass-derived polymers. His group studies nanomaterials, self-assembly, functional surfaces, biomimetic materials, emulsions, foams, gels, and green manufacturing processes aimed at replacing fossil-based materials. Professor Rojas is one of

the most highly cited researchers in his field, having published hundreds of scientific papers and mentored large numbers of graduate students and postdoctoral researchers. He has been repeatedly recognized among the world's most highly cited scientists.

Professor Rojas received the 2024 Agents of Change Award due to his role in the launch of the Indigenous Outreach Program at University of British Columbia's BioProducts Institute, which aimed to engage Indigenous youth in STEM, integrate Indigenous knowledge into biobased innovation, and build lasting community partnerships through annual outreach events, mentorship, workshops, and collaborative learning opportunities.

KELLEY OH



Kelley Oh is the Engagement and EDII Facilitator at the University of British Columbia's BioProducts Institute (BPI), where she drives strategic engagement across research, industry and community networks. She leads BPI's Indigenous youth outreach, developing experiential STEM and mentorship programs in partnership with Indigenous communities and organizations.

Her work includes Sustainable Future Makers, supported by the Elsevier Foundation's 2024 Materials Today Agents of Change Award. Oh facilitates BPI's EDII Committee, advancing a more inclusive and connected research community. She holds a BSc in Physics from KAIST and an MSc in Geophysics from Stanford University and is pursuing an MDiv part-time at Regent College.

ELIZABETH COSGRIFF-HERNANDEZ



Elizabeth Cosgriff-Hernandez is a Professor of biomedical engineering at The University of Texas at Austin and holder of the Cullen Trust for Higher Education Endowed Professorship in Engineering. Her research focuses on the design of polymeric biomaterials, tissue engineering scaffolds, and advanced fabrication methods for medical devices and regenerative medicine applications.

She earned her B.S. in Biomedical Engineering and Ph.D. in Macromolecular Science and Engineering from Case Western Reserve University and completed postdoctoral training in orthopedic tissue engineering at Rice University. A recognized leader in biomaterials science, she has served in prominent editorial and advisory roles and is a Fellow of the International Union of Societies for Biomaterials Science and Engineering, the Biomedical Engineering Society, and the American Institute for Medical and Biological Engineering. Her contributions to research, innovation, and education have earned her numerous professional honors and awards.

Professor Cosgriff-Hernandez received the 2024 Agents of Change Award due to her role driving BME UNITE. Founded in 2020, BME UNITE is a nationwide movement of nearly 480 faculty members dedicated to increasing racial and ethnic diversity in academia. The organization has advanced equity in biomedical engineering through advocacy, research, and professional development initiatives, including efforts that highlighted funding disparities at the NIH and helped establish the Genentech Research Awards Program for underrepresented minority faculty. In partnership with the Biomedical Engineering Society, BME UNITE supports aspiring faculty through mentorship and career development programs, helping fellows connect with academic hiring leaders and transition into faculty positions.

CHARLOTTE BERREZUETA PALACIOS



Charlotte Berrezueta Palacios is a Ph.D. candidate in physics at the Freie Universität Berlin, specializing in low-dimensional materials using Raman spectroscopy. Originally from the Galapagos Islands, Ecuador, she earned her B.Sc. in nanotechnology engineering at Yachay Tech University before completing an M.Sc. in physics at the Freie Universität Berlin, where she continues her research in Professor Stephanie Reich's laboratory, focusing on 2D nanostructured materials, a field she has been working in since 2020.

In addition to her academic pursuits, Charlotte is dedicated to science outreach. She co-chairs the Nanoscience Summer School at Yachay Tech (NSSY), a conference held in the Galapagos Islands that promotes student development and community engagement. Berrezueta Palacios received the 2023 Materials Today Agents of Change Award for her contributions to NSSY.

VISHAL CHAUDHARY



Dr. Vishal Chaudhary is a lecturer at Mahidol University in Thailand since 2025. He is an expert in the field of green semiconductors at the nanoscale for One Health management, with a special focus on breath-based diagnosis, environmental sensors and waste-water remediation. He has published more than 100 peer-reviewed articles, 4 authored books, and 3 edited books in reputed journals.

He has been recognized as Top 2% of Scientists in both 2023 and 2024 by the Stanford University List and is also serving as an associate editor and review editor in significant journals. He founded “The Happy Mentals Club” after battling depression during his doctorate tenure, and started to aid the research community, especially students, for mental health-related help through his public talks and club events.

Dr. Chaudhary received the 2023 Materials Today Agents of Change Award due to his dedicated work in the field of mental health for researchers. Currently, he

aims to establish mental health clubs in academic and research institutes, examine the prevalence of mental health issues by conducting surveys during his talk and examining its causative factors, correlate mental health concerns with environmental factors, develop non-invasive biosensors to screen mental health, root out the stigma related to mental health, especially in the LGBTQI+ community, and developing awareness on suicide prevention through his club and institute collaborative initiatives.

BARBARA ROTHEN-RUTISHAUSER



Professor Dr. Barbara Rothen-Rutishauser received her Ph.D. in 1996 in cell biology at the Swiss Federal Institute of Technology in Zurich (ETHZ). She worked as postdoc and group leader at ETHZ and the University of Bern, Switzerland. She is an expert in the field of cell-nanoparticle interactions, with a special focus on human 3D tissue models.

Since 2011, she is the chair in BioNanomaterials at the Adolphe Merkle Institute (AMI), University of Fribourg, Switzerland, the position is shared equally with Professor Alke Fink.

Professor Rothen-Rutishauser has published more than 300 peer-reviewed papers and is an associate editor of “Particle and Fibre Toxicology”. She received the 2019 Materials Today Agents of Change Award together with Dr. S. Martin Caba and Professor A. Fink from the University of Fribourg.

LANELL A. WILLIAMS



LaNell A. Williams is an associate research scholar in the Center for the Physics of Biological Functions at Princeton University. She currently studies the formation of a carbon-fixating membraneless organelle inside algae called the pyrenoid. She earned her PhD from Harvard University in May 2023 studying the self-assembly of viral proteins around RNA.

Williams has also been heavily involved in programming with the National Society of Black Physicists (NSBP), and serves on the American Physical Society Council of Representatives representing the Forum on Graduate Students & the Forum on Early Careers.

In addition to research, she founded an education non-profit focused on increasing the number of Black and Brown women+ and gender minorities who receive STEM PhDs (the Women+ of Color Project) and served on the American Physical Society Council & Board of Executives, representing the Forum on Graduate Student Affairs, from 2019 to 2023.

Williams received the 2019 Materials Today Agents of Change Award for her leadership of the education non-profit the Women+ of Color Project (WOCP), which provides an online classroom that provides resources and support to women+ of color applying to graduate school in STEM fields like Math, Physics, Materials Science, Planetary Science, or any other physical science discipline.

DOMIZIANA FRANCESCON



Domiziana Francescon serves as the Elsevier Foundation's Partnerships Director, where she works with partners around the world to establish collaborations that advance inclusive research and health – supporting the UN Sustainable Development Goals. She also serves as Program Director for Elsevier's corporate responsibility partnerships, especially focusing on sustainability and Inclusion & Diversity spaces.

Additionally, Domiziana is the Co-Chair of the Eligibility team of Research4Life (www.research4life.org), a UN-publisher partnership to bridge access gaps for researchers and doctors in the Global South – and she is actively involved in marketing and fundraising initiatives for the partnership.