

2026 BLUES AWARD WINNERS



Business and Innovation

Maadhav Arora

Faculty of Engineering and Design

Maadhav's team won the 2026 L'Oréal Brandstorm Australia and New Zealand National Final, becoming the first New Zealand team to win the competition. Team MNM then reached the global top six from approximately 380,000 entrants across 64 countries, presenting Mémoire, an AI memory-to-fragrance platform, at VivaTech in Paris.

Yunshu Bai

Faculty of Engineering and Design, Faculty of Arts and Education

Yunshu's team won the international Accounting for Social Impact Case Competition, outperforming teams from 22 universities across 12 countries. Yunshu's other teams placed second at the Oceania Case Competition, first at the national Community Case Challenge and in the top 20 at the CBS Global Case Competition.

Nathaniel Malik

Josiah Brown

Faculty of Engineering and Design, Faculty of Science

Nathaniel's team won the 2026 L'Oréal Brandstorm Australia and New Zealand National Final, becoming the first New Zealand team to win the competition. Team MNM then reached the global top six from approximately 380,000 entrants across 64 countries, presenting Mémoire, an AI memory-to-fragrance platform, at VivaTech in Paris.

Eliot Harmen Stolte Chignell

Faculty of Science

Eliot co-founded NextPlay, a live sports prediction game, as technical lead. His team placed third at the 2025 Velocity \$100k Challenge, New Zealand's largest university entrepreneurship competition, winning \$5,000 and a Venture Lab incubator place. Eliot also scaled the platform to thousands of users and developed its live production infrastructure.

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BLUES ²⁰
AWARDS ²⁶

Cameron Max Price Cunliffe

Faculty of Business and Economics, Faculty of Arts and Education

Cameron's team represented the University of Auckland at the 2026 Aarhus Advanced Case Competition in Denmark, placing second among 12 international teams. After seven weekends of preparation, the team developed commercial solutions to three strategic challenges for Danish footwear company AIRTOX and presented recommendations to executives and judges from AIRTOX, Accenture and Deloitte.

Cris Yerik Rodriguez Escandor

Faculty of Business and Economics, Faculty of Science

Cris placed first in his category at Project Run With It, held during the 2025 Beta Alpha Psi International Annual Meeting in San Antonio, Texas. Selected among 69 shortlisted competitors, his team delivered a scalable alumni engagement strategy and secured the Auckland Chapter's first international Beta Alpha Psi victory.

Rohitraj Reddy Guthpe

Faculty of Business and Economics

Rohitraj's team represented the University of Auckland at the 2026 Aarhus Advanced Case Competition in Denmark, placing second among 12 international teams. After seven weekends of preparation, the team developed commercial solutions to three strategic challenges for Danish footwear company AIRTOX and presented recommendations to executives and judges from AIRTOX, Accenture and Deloitte.

Kotaro Ishii

Faculty of Law, Faculty of Business and Economics

Kotaro and Zach placed second in the 'Impacting Connections' category at the 2025 Best Practices World Finals in San Antonio, United States, competing against more than 100 teams. Their professionally recognised micro-credential supports students to engage with members, volunteer at high schools and develop leadership skills.

Cathy Lee Kang

Faculty of Business and Economics, Faculty of Science

Cathy's team placed first at the AUT Accounting for Social Impact Case Competition against teams from 22 international universities. The team's market expansion and AI integration strategies demonstrated how commercial viability, sustainability and ethics could advance Ethique's mission, with the proposed strategy projected to save 60 million bottles from landfill.

Zach Aiden Kirby

Faculty of Law, Faculty of Business and Economics

Zach and Kotaro placed second in the 'Impacting Connections' category at the 2025 Best Practices World Finals in San Antonio, United States, competing against more than 100 teams. Their professionally recognised micro-credential supports students to engage with members, volunteer at high schools and develop leadership skills.

Omar Hassan Said Mourad

Faculty of Engineering and Design, Faculty of Business and Economics

Omar co-founded NextPlay, a free-to-play live sports prediction game, and placed third in the 2025 Velocity \$100k Challenge, New Zealand's largest university entrepreneurship competition, also winning Best Pitch. NextPlay now operates at scale, peaking at 2,000 concurrent players during a single World Cup match.

Joanna Ya Lan Pan

Faculty of Business and Economics, Faculty of Science

Joanna's team represented the University of Auckland at the 2026 Aarhus Advanced Case Competition in Denmark, placing second among 12 international teams. After seven weekends of preparation, the team developed commercial solutions to three strategic challenges for Danish footwear company AIRTOX and presented recommendations to executives and judges from AIRTOX, Accenture and Deloitte.

Mihir Ojas Rallapudi

Faculty of Engineering and Design

Mihir's team won the 2026 L'Oréal Brandstorm Australia and New Zealand National Final, becoming the first New Zealand team to win the competition. Team MNM then reached the global top six from approximately 380,000 entrants across 64 countries, presenting Mémoire, an AI memory-to-fragrance platform, at VivaTech in Paris.

Nima Sadeghzadeh

Bioengineering Institute

Nima has developed award-winning artificial intelligence methods that detect brain tumours, measure their size and predict future growth from a single MRI scan. His research has earned national and international recognition, most notably third place in MICCAI's prestigious BraTS Challenge, strengthening New Zealand's portfolio in medical AI research.

Thenuka Shiron Sabesan

Faculty of Law, Faculty of Business and Economics

Thenuka won the QUT Trans-Tasman Business Case Competition, outperforming teams from Australia and New Zealand, and placed fifth among 20 teams at the Chulalongkorn International Business Case Competition in Bangkok. She developed original strategies under pressure and presented them to panels of senior industry judges.

Roshan Jakob ter Wal

Faculty of Engineering and Design, Faculty of Business and Economics

Roshan's teams placed first at the AUT Accounting for Social Impact Case Competition and QUT Trans-Tasman Business Case Competition. At the Marshall International Case Competition in Los Angeles, Roshan's team placed second in the first case and fifth in the second, demonstrating strong business acumen across commercial and impact-focused challenges.