“I chose McGill Bioengineering because of its strong interdisciplinary approach, its emphasis on translating research into real-world impact, and its reputation for excellence in biomedical research and innovation. The program’s close integration of engineering, life sciences, and clinical relevance strongly aligned with my long-term interests in developing technologies that directly improve health outcomes.”

Meet Our Alumni

McGill | Department of Bioengineering

REZA ABBASI

Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) – Bioengineering, 2024 • Postdoctoral Researcher at McGill University, CEO & Co-Founder of Phoela Health Inc.

Meet Reza, a Postdoctoral Researcher at McGill University. After completing his PhD, Reza became the CEO & Co-Founder of Phoela Health Inc., a McGill spin-off company developing next-generation biosensing platforms for rapid microbial detection in real-world settings.

Why did you choose McGill bioengineering?

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What did you pursue after graduation?

“Immediately after completing my PhD, I transitioned into a postdoctoral role while simultaneously scaling the research into a startup called Phoela Health Inc. The year after I graduated was focused on translating academic research into deployable technology, securing funding, building partnerships, and advancing the commercialization of biosensing solutions originating from McGill.”

In what ways did the bioengineering program support your career development?

“The bioengineering program’s emphasis on interdisciplinary problem-solving and hands-on research was foundational to my career. Research projects, exposure to translational science, and engagement with McGill’s innovation ecosystem, particularly McGill Engine, technology transfer support, and entrepreneurship programs, played a major role in shaping my ability to move from lab-scale research to real-world applications. Leadership roles in student initiatives and collaborative research environments also helped me develop both technical depth and professional confidence.”

What is your favorite thing about your career?

“My favorite part of my career is seeing ideas move from a research concept to something that can make a tangible impact in the real world. Bridging academia, industry, and entrepreneurship, while mentoring students and collaborating across disciplines, is deeply rewarding.”

Tell us about a memorable moment you had as a McGill bioengineering student.

“One particularly memorable moment was successfully demonstrating a working prototype of a biosensor after months of iterative design and troubleshooting. Seeing a system I helped design produce meaningful data for the first time, and realizing its real-world potential, was both challenging and incredibly motivating.”

What advice can you give to current or prospective McGill bioengineering students, or to those who are in the early stages of their career?

“Be curious, be patient with failure, and don’t be afraid to explore paths beyond traditional academic trajectories. Take advantage of McGill’s collaborative culture, seek mentorship early, and remember that bioengineering is as much about problem-solving and impact as it is about technical skill. McGill bioengineering provided me with an environment that encouraged ambition, interdisciplinary thinking, and innovation. I’m grateful for the mentorship, resources, and community that supported my journey from graduate student to researcher-entrepreneur, and I’m proud to remain connected to McGill as both an alumnus and collaborator.”