Research Networking Strategies for Research Development Professionals

Jeff Horon – NORDP Conference – May 2013

ELSEVIER

AGENDA

Research networking landscape

Objections and challenges

Research networking strategies

Q&A

Research Networking

Research networking adoption increasing

Effort is largely in passive research networking tools

- Passive = Researcher must take an action, e.g. visit a website
- Active = Imperative; Event-driven

Smarter use of passive networking tools

- Effective rollouts, internal marketing campaigns
- Features to facilitate collaboration

Strong interest in analytics and ROI

and…

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Research Team Selection

Identification of potential collaborators in a given topic area

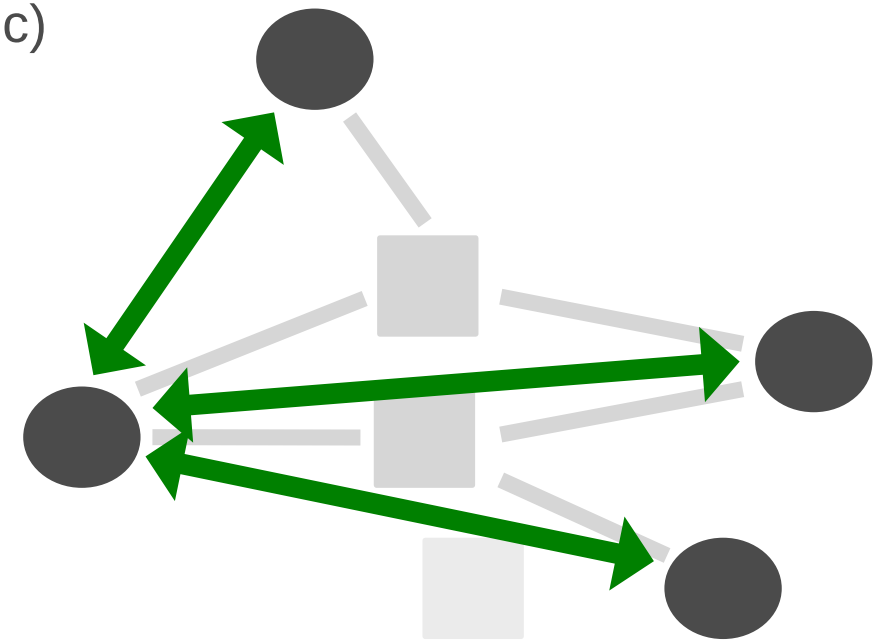
Best practice: Iterate search terms for concepts to arrive at more inclusive results and fewer false positives

e.g. for metabolomics:

-metabol* (metabolic, metabolism, metabolomics)

-calori* (calorie, calories, caloric)

-vitamin* (vitamin A, vitamin B)



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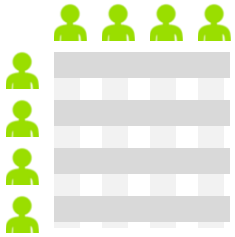
Proposal Preparation

Data-gathering challenge at the limits of ‘human scale’

 # true/false values = (# investigators^2 - # investigators) (# types of working relationships)

100 investigators = **9,900 cells to fill in**



	Researcher1	Researcher2	Researcher3	Researcher4
Researcher1	---			
Researcher2	Co-author: Y Co-grant: N	---		
Researcher3	Co-author: N Co-grant: N	Co-author: Y Co-grant: Y	---	
Researcher4	Co-author: N Co-grant: Y	Co-author: N Co-grant: Y	Co-author: Y Co-grant: Y	---

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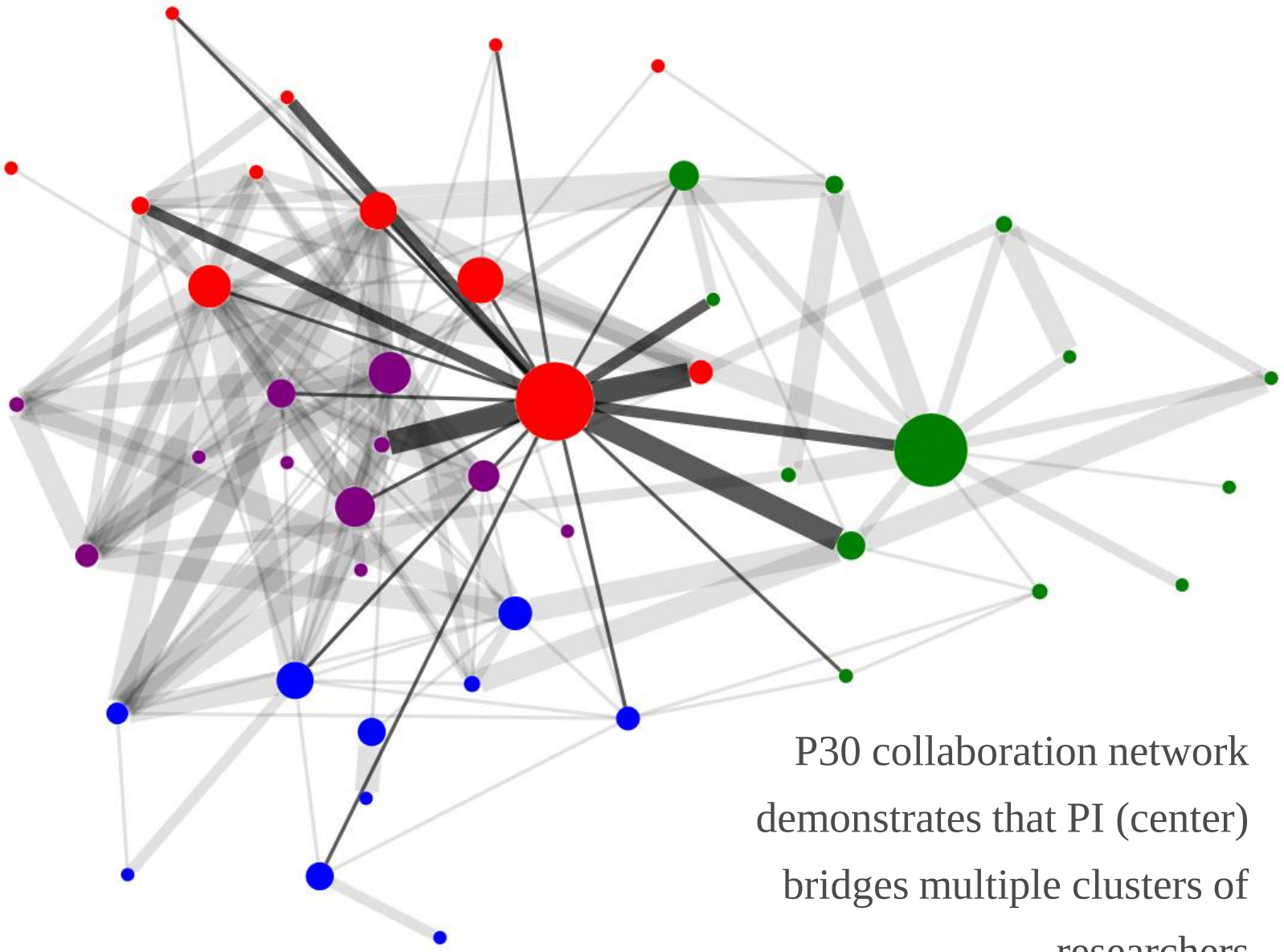
Demonstration of Collaborative Relationships



P30 collaboration network demonstrates that PI (center) bridges multiple clusters of researchers

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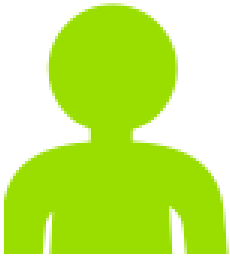
‘Recommender Systems’



You should meet…

(why)

(why)

(why)

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Researcher ‘Recommender Systems’ – Data Collection

Indicate interests

[ ] A

[ ] B

[ ] C

Indicate methodological expertise/needs

Method	Can Provide	Need	Not Interested
D	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
E	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
F	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]

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Researcher ‘Recommender Systems’ – Targeted Recommendations

Hello _____ _____,

… based upon survey responses, we would like to suggest that you meet:

Name: _____ _____
Institution: _____

Can provide expertise in: Cancer Survivorship

Seeks an expert in: Global Clinical Trials Research, Personalized Medicine

Shares a common interest in: Lymphoma

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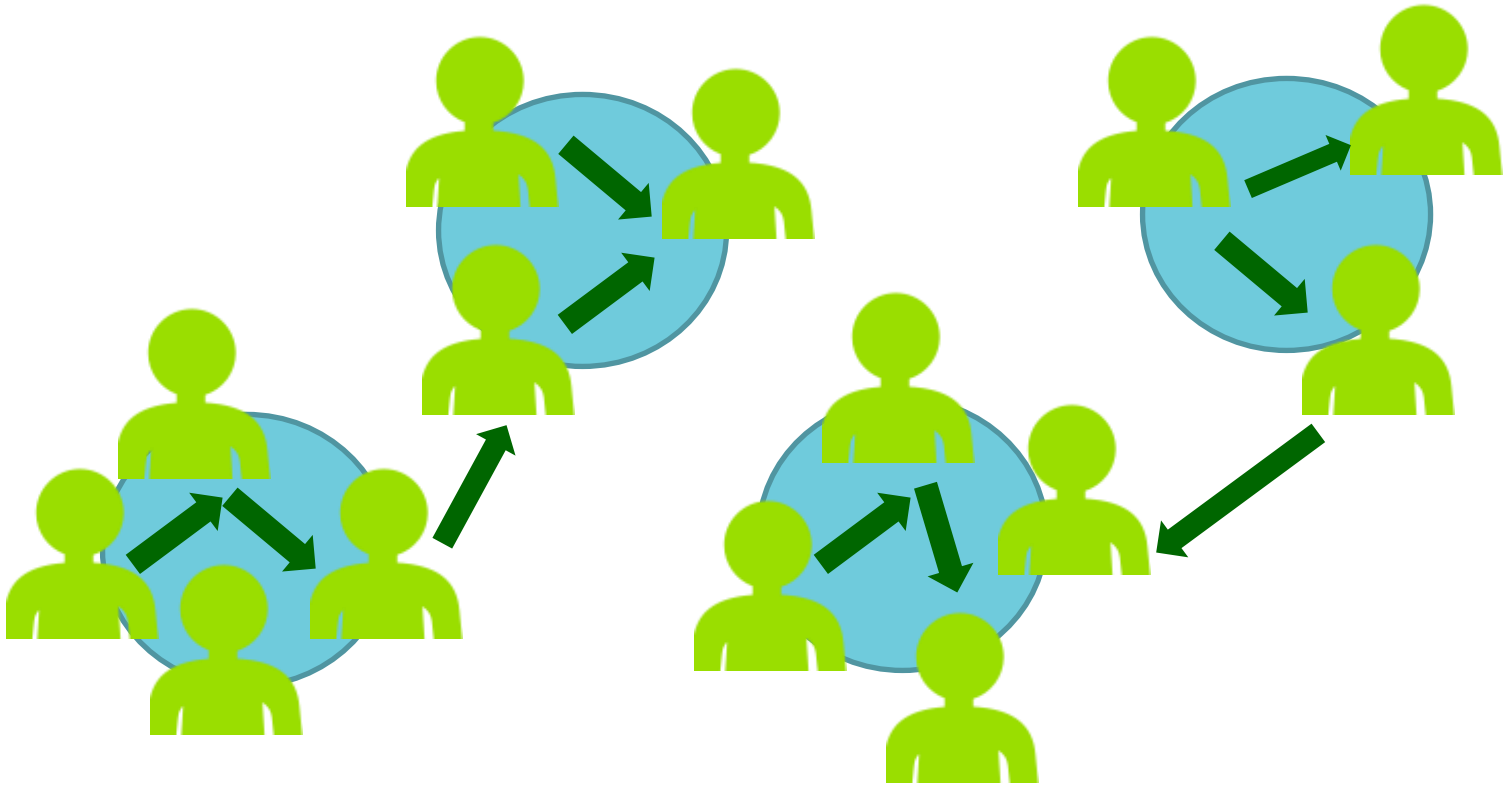
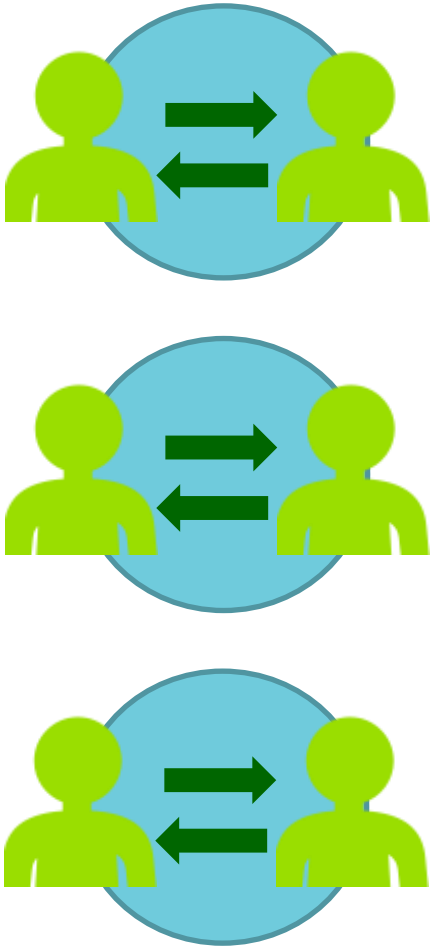
Research Networking Events

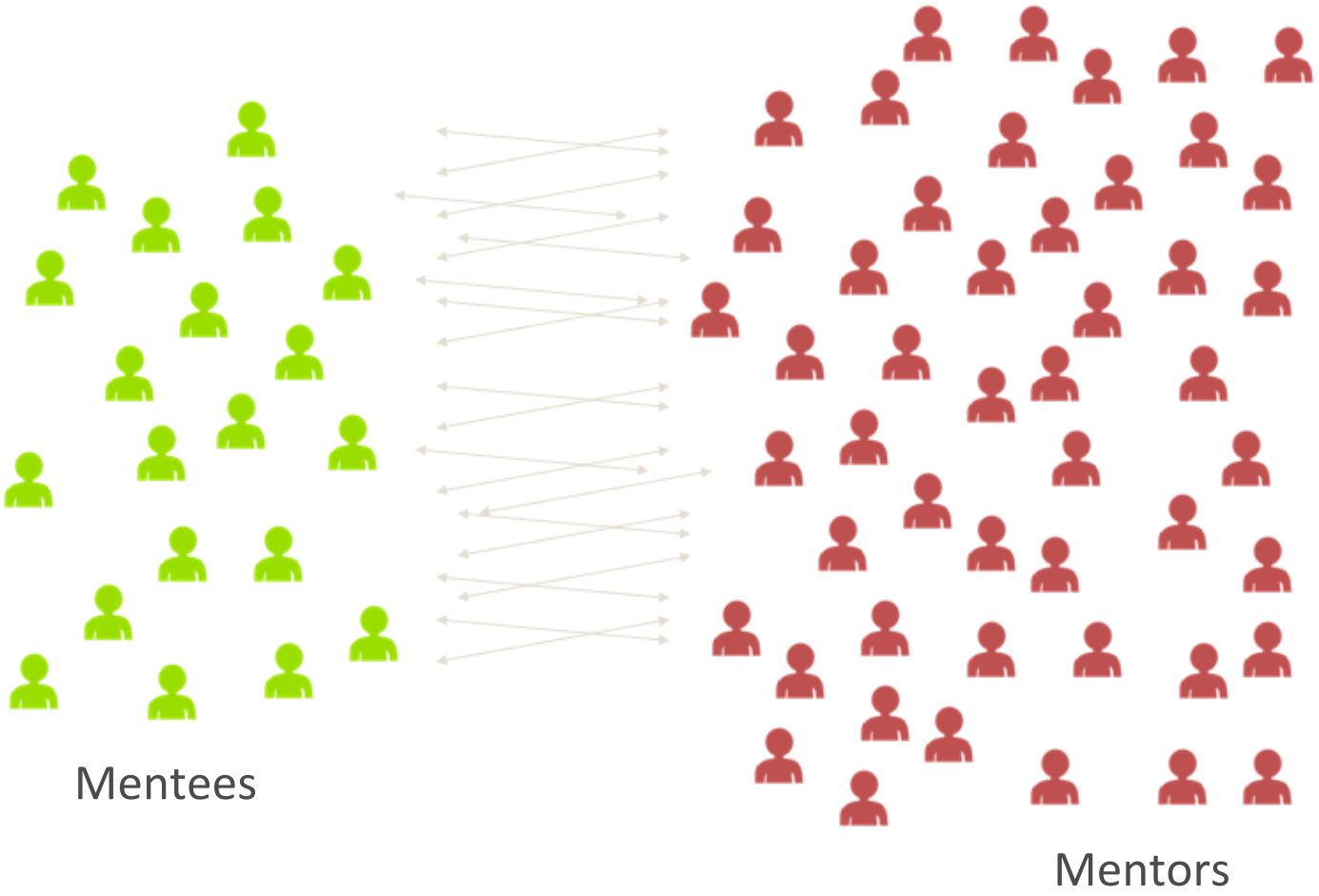
…. with a seating chart designed to maximize the chances strong matches will interact…



Researcher ‘Speed Dating’ Events



Mentor Matching



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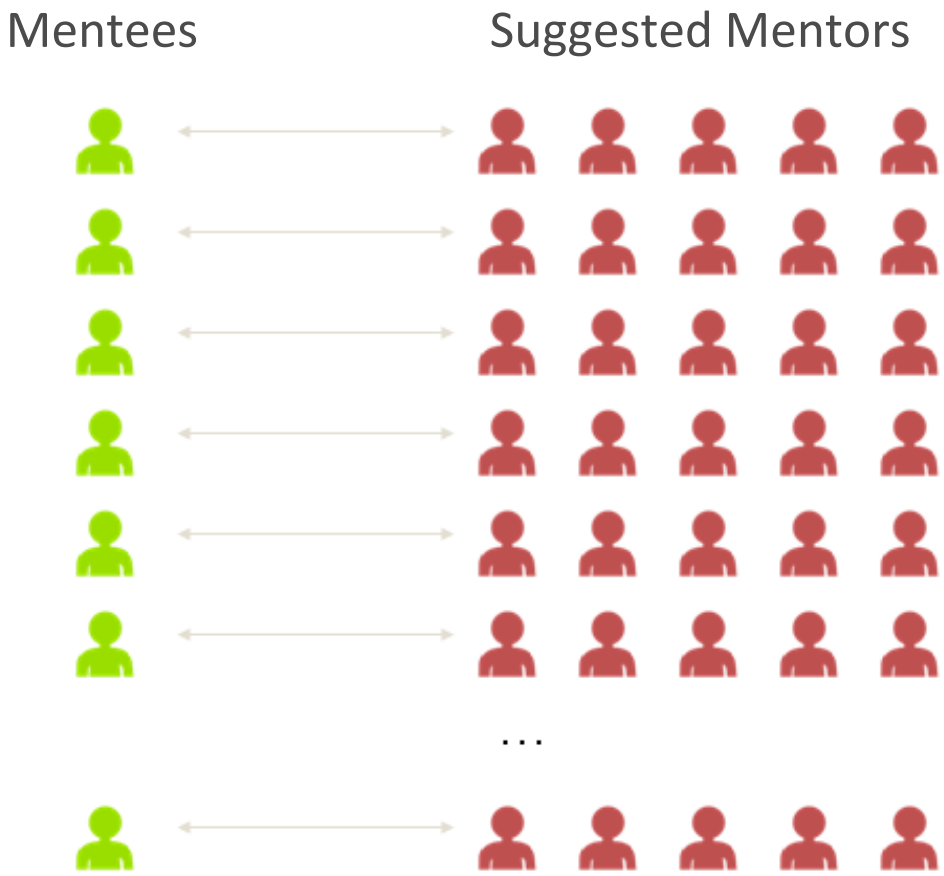

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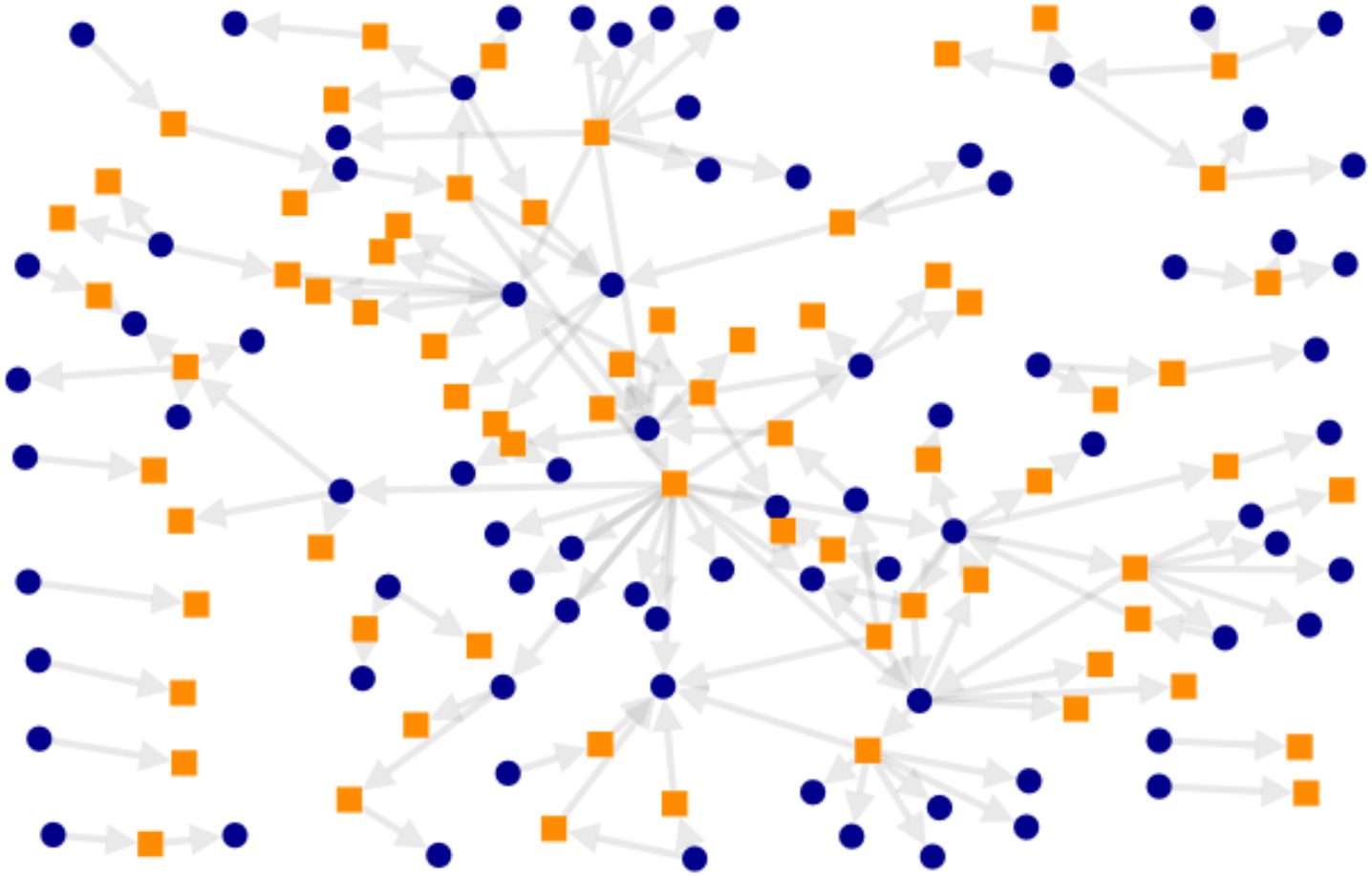
Researcher Objections

“I already know everyone working in my field”

Never the case in my experience!

Researcher Objections

Evidence: University of Michigan Disease Target Sponsored Project Network



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Researcher Objections

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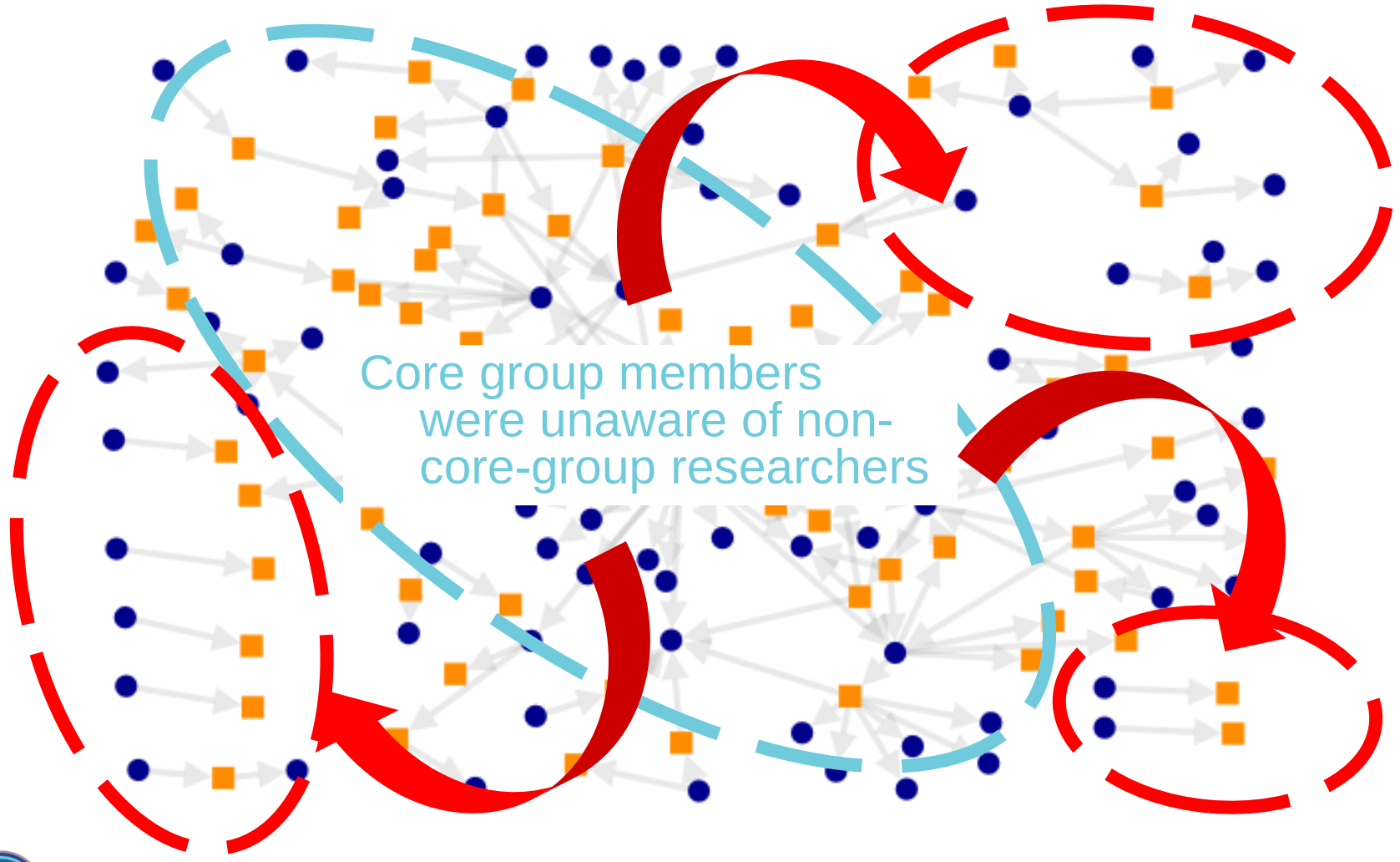

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Researcher Objections

Evidence: University of Michigan Researchers working with a family of anatomical concepts

Senior researcher listed **40 colleagues** by name

Search found ~1,500 on campus working with relevant concepts, hundreds as an area of focus

Researcher Objections

“I only need a new collaborator every couple years and I only look for them when I need them”

What if… their work addresses a problem you’ve been trying to solve? …. they really are a great potential collaborator for you? …. or for one of your current collaborators? …. one of their collaborators is seeking someone like you?

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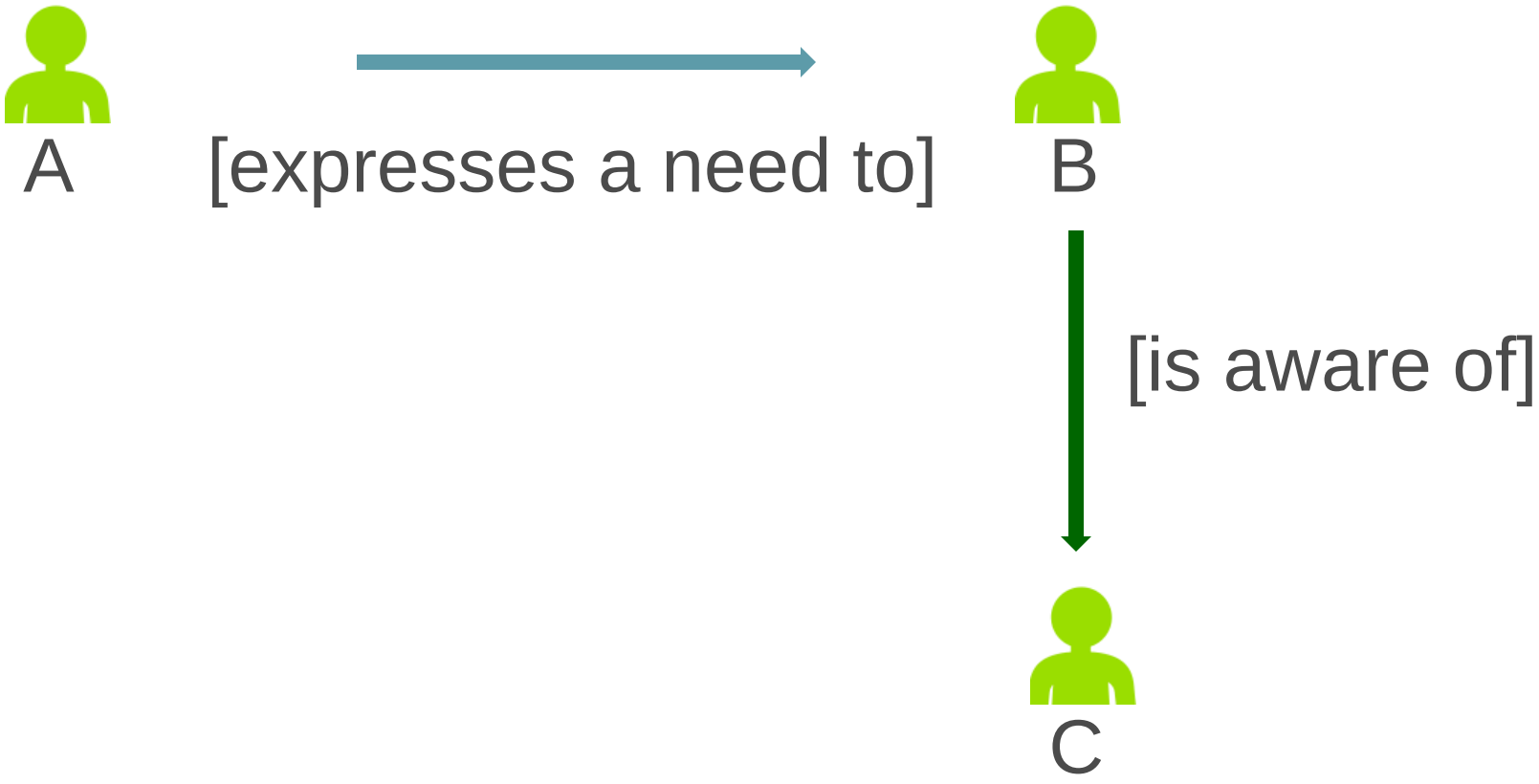
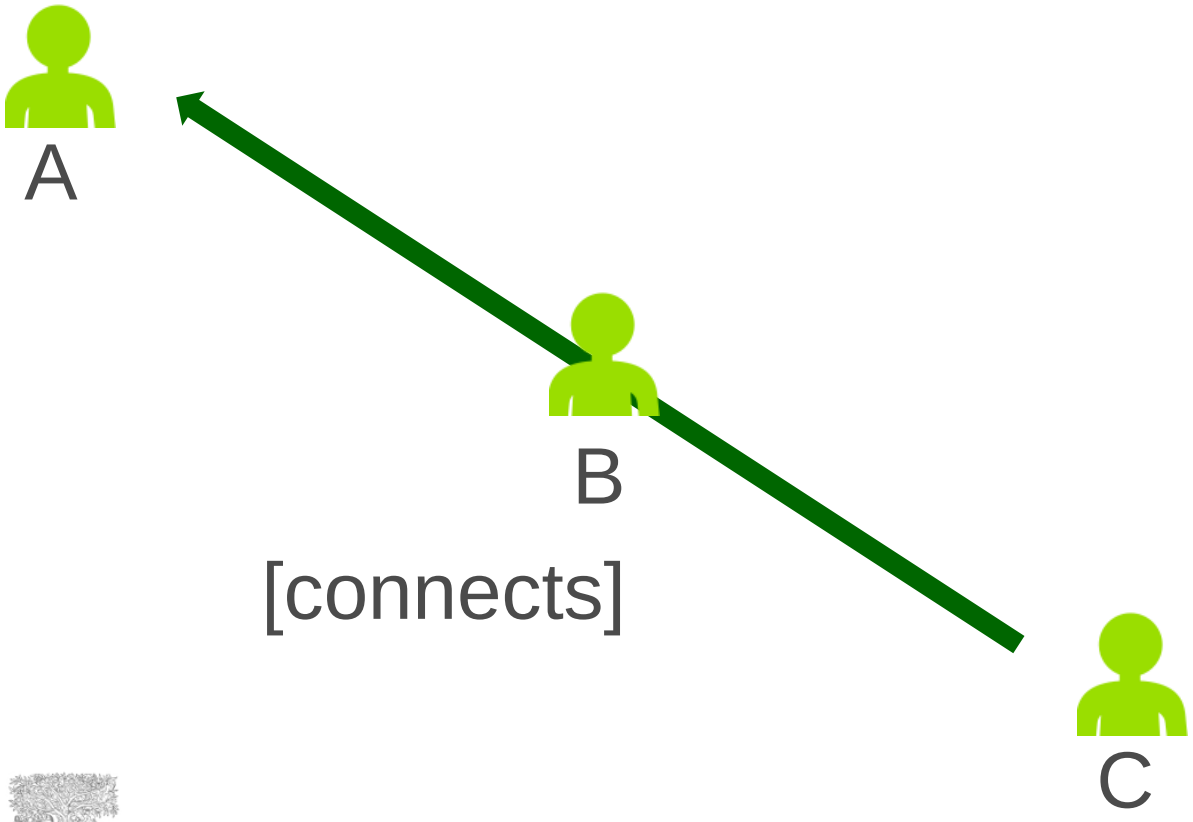
Researcher Objections

Suppose:

Researcher Objections

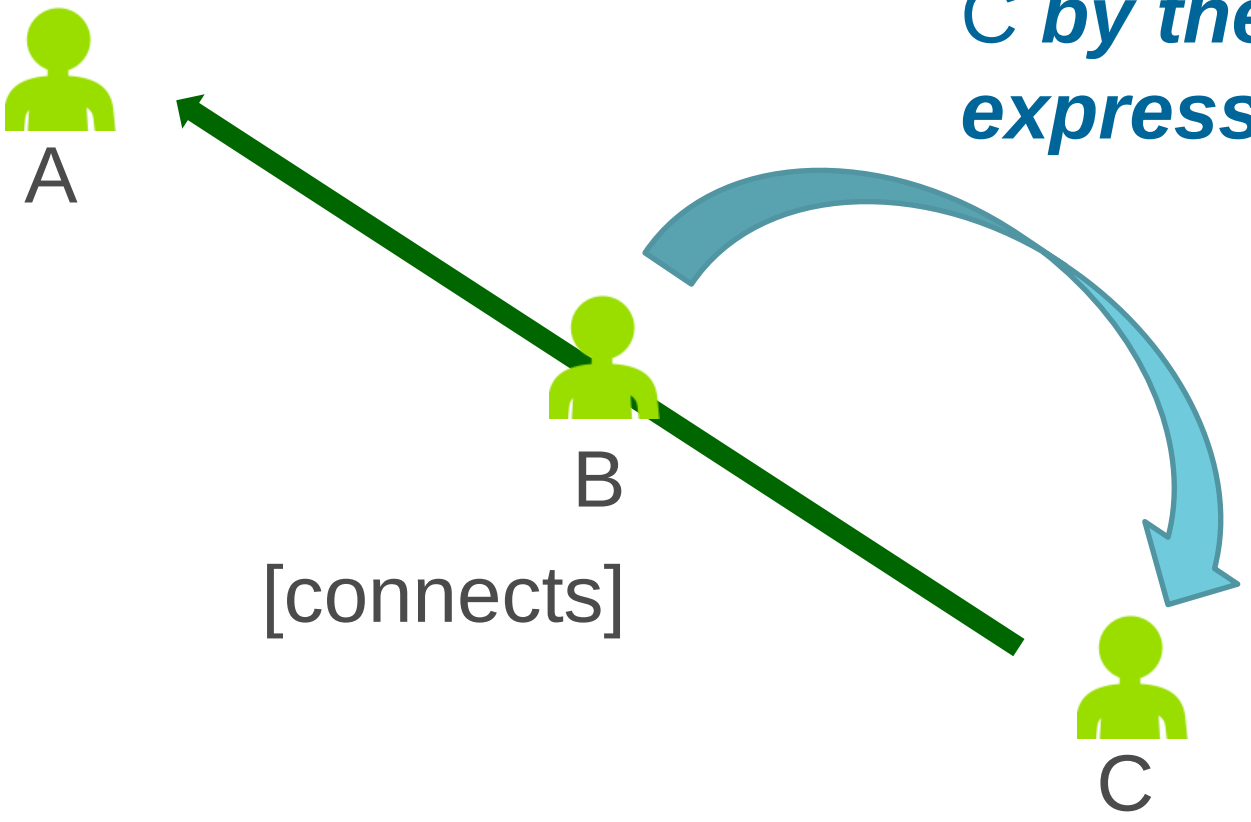


Researcher Objections



Researcher Objections

In order to be helpful, B had to be aware of C ***by the time A expressed a need***



Challenges

Effort ≠ Success

Increased attention to Return on Investment (ROI), which in this context:

- Is often misunderstood
- Can be difficult to measure
- Has a long time horizon

- Research idea
- Team formation
- Applications for external sponsorship
- Project
- Publication (or other research outputs, like Patents)
- Citation (or other outcomes)

(by analogy…)

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Moving platform

Moving target

Poor visibility to long-term outcomes

So, why engage in research networking?

Even though ROI is difficult to quantify, **we know that there are returns that accrue from collaborations**:

- Researchers who are aware of each other might collaborate
- Researchers who are not aware of each other will not collaborate
- …. and the effects don't include just the participants in networking activities (A-B-C example)

Secondarily, **your peer institutions are engaged in research networking**; as a result they may be:

- More interconnected
- More readily able to demonstrate collaboration (e.g. in applications for external sponsorship)

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Strategies for Research Networking

Above all, intervene

Take the initiative because researchers have objections (often false, but pervasive) and more interconnected networks are better for everyone

Research Development Professionals have more compatible goals (mandates to connect people / seek increased collaboration, keeping award dollars on campus, etc.)

Make it *look* easy (like added value not added work)

Focus on high-yield data collection, e.g. a few ‘baked in’ questions in an event registration form

Consider opt-in

Create data-driven, better-than-chance interactions

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Strategies for Research Networking

Measure Outcomes

First impressions

Applications for seed funding / pilot projects

Applications for external sponsorship

Coauthorship and other research outputs

Influence (citations and other outcomes)

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