



Center for Scientific  
Collaboration and  
Community Engagement

# eLife Ambassadors Workshop Part 1

## An introduction to Community Engagement: understanding how communities are important in STEM



**Lou Woodley**, CSCCE Founder and Director  
**Camillle Santistevan**, CSCCE Director of Learning

@TheCSCCE  
[info@cscce.org](mailto:info@cscce.org)



# Welcome! A few logistics to get started...

- **We'll be using a Google doc and a Google sheet in today's session.**
  - The doc contains activity instructions and you can always come back to it if you get lost.
  - The sheet is where we'll be working through some activity questions together.
  - The links will be shared in Zoom chat.
- Today's session is the first of two. The second session will build on the core concepts we explore today to help you to start thinking about a strategy for community engagement with your project.
  - **The second session is next Tuesday, March 15 at the same time (4pm UTC)**
  - Don't forget that the clocks go forward one hour this weekend in the US!

## Introducing yourself

- In the doc, find the attendee list and add your name, affiliation and one reason you're excited about the eLife Ambassador Program.
- **Remember your number - you're going to need it later!**



# Nice to meet you!



**Lou Woodley, Founder and Director**

Arlington, VA, USA

- **Scientist by training** – with research work in Heidelberg, Barcelona and Cambridge
- Extensive experience in scholarly communications and open science - social media strategy, community-led events, product management
- 5+ years at AAAS building **Trellis** and **Community Engagement Fellows Program**. Also leading NSF-funded initiatives in **diversity, equity and inclusion**.



**Camille Santistevan, Director of Learning**

New York, NY, USA

- Academic background in **non-profit admin, social work, and political science**
- 6+ years at City University of New York establishing a new **interdisciplinary research facility** (CUNY ASRC) – events, comms & marketing, public engagement
- Experience designing, delivering, and evaluating **evidence-based career development programs** sponsored by the NSF and the NYC Dept of Health & Mental Hygiene.

You can find links to the CSCCE website and our resources in the virtual notes doc

# Today's workshop

- **We are going to:**

- Help you understand why communities matter for culture change in STEM
  - Understand how different communities can interrelate
  - Review the characteristics of communities that you currently belong to (and that might be relevant to your eLife Ambassador project)
- 
- Throughout the workshop, we will reference an example
    - If you get lost, you can always go back to the example to understand what we are doing together and apply the concepts you're learning at a later date as you refine your project plans



**If you have a question, please put /Q in chat in Zoom and we'll ask you to speak**

# REMINDER: Please add your name to the virtual notes doc and remember your number

- If you are just joining:
  - We are going to be doing several activities together in shared Google docs and spreadsheets
  - Please take a moment to **add your name to table in the “Attendees” section of the virtual notes doc.**
  - **Make a note of your number** – you’ll be filling in worksheets using your number throughout the workshop



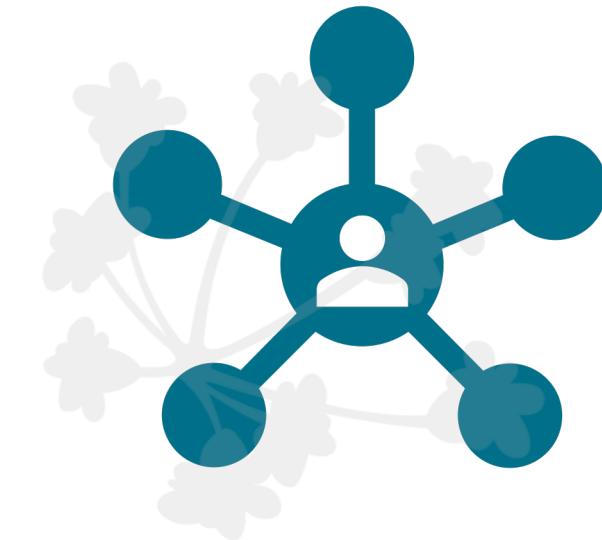
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What do we mean  
by community?

# Why is community important in STEM research?

*Communities – and community managers – help manage complexity*

- **The way science is carried out is changing** – more complex, multi-disciplinary, with larger teams spread across different locations.
- **Communities are key to managing this complexity** – how they're structured determines how we share equipment, train others, critique and iterate knowledge, and disseminate research outputs.
- Anything that involves this level of complexity requires coordination - human infrastructure. We call this role a **community manager**.
- Community managers may be **formal or informal roles** and job titles can vary a lot (and may not mention community at all!).



# Benefits of community management

*Supporting inclusion, belonging and sharing*

## What do community managers actually do?

- They improve communication between group members, help align goals, facilitate integration of members into the team, work to counter-act power imbalances etc...
- .... which leads to **more trust and clarity** among the group members;
- ....which leads to a **greater willingness to share**, and share more openly;
- ....which leads to **faster, clearer, more productive communication and collaboration**;

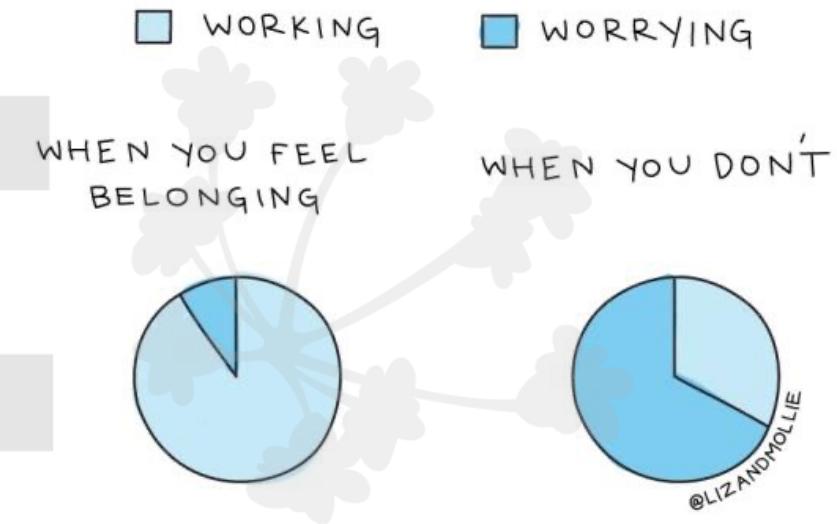


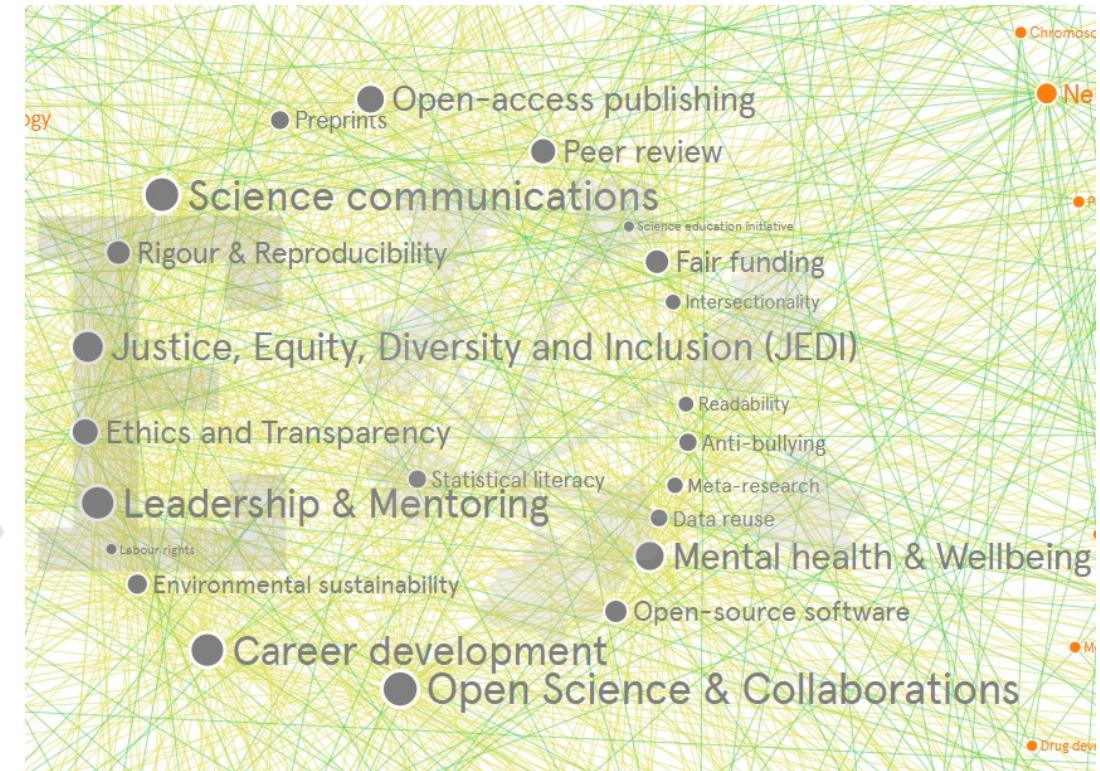
Image credit: No hard feelings, Fosslien and West Duffy

## All of this culture change benefits science

# Why community is important to the eLife Ambassador program

As eLife Ambassadors, you're both a part of a global community and will be supporting your own!

- The eLife Ambassadors program “aims to enable early-stage researchers to **build lasting support networks** and to help them innovate solutions and work together to **overcome the many barriers and issues that their research communities face.**”
- As part of the program, you'll be:
  - Contributing to the eLife Ambassador community by sharing back what you learn.
  - Devising a project for your own scientific community (or maybe creating a new one!)
- We're here to help you think about how you can execute a project that will improve scientific culture in some way



Screenshot of the topics you're most passionate about from:  
<https://graphcommons.com/graphs/5177afce-e78a-4916-95f8-2b039e97a0da>

# What might your research communities look like?

- Departments, programs, or initiatives where work gets done together.  
This could look like:
  - An individual research lab
  - Working groups
  - Committees
  - Clubs
- Research collaborations spanning many different institutions
- Umbrella orgs / hosts – organizations that support the above
  - Universities or colleges
  - Not-for-profit organizations
  - Professional associations
  - Companies



# Example: Biochemistry 101 Study Group

*Our running example for the workshop*

- **The Biochemistry 101 Study Group**

- An informal group of students who meet once a week to complete homework and prepare for tests during the Biochemistry 101 course.
- The group was created by two students who noticed that many students could benefit from additional support.
- Biochemistry 101 is a prerequisite for many different majors at their university.
- About half of the students taking Biochemistry 101 are interested in pursuing a medical career
- The other half are looking to become researchers in the natural sciences e.g., as chemists, biochemists.
- A small number are interested in becoming forensic scientists.

- **Some key features:**

- 150 students are taking Biochemistry 101. Of those, 20 are actively participating in the study group each week
- Some participants bring snacks to share with others
- A few participants have also shared information about other resources and opportunities available on campus (free math and writing tutoring, counseling center, social activities)
- The course instructor and department head are aware of the study group but are not involved with organizing it in any way.

# 1a Activity: What research communities do you belong to?

*Lab groups, departments, journal clubs...*

- **Choose one of the research communities that you belong to** that might be relevant to your eLife Ambassador project (e.g., a lab group, an online community, a working group, a journal club).
- **Using the spreadsheet provided in the virtual notes doc, find your number.**
- **Then silently answer the following questions:**
  - Add your name
  - What is the community called?
  - What is it for?
  - Who can join it?
  - What do members do together?



# 1a Example: Biochemistry 101 Study Group

What research communities do you belong to?

Activity 1a: What research communities do you belong to?				
Your name	What is your community called?	What is it for?	Who can join it?	What do members do together?
Sally Squirrel	Biochemistry 101 Study Group	To help students in Biochemistry 101 earn a passing grade	Students enrolled in the Biochemistry 101 course	Encourage each other to complete weekly homework assignments and study for tests. Help troubleshoot challenges with the course content.

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Any questions?

# 1b Activity: What are the characteristics of your community?

**In the main room:**

- In tab 1b, find your row number
- Silently answer the following questions:

## **Questions**

- What are the characteristics of your community?
  - Is membership clearly defined?
  - Is there a formal process for joining?
  - What makes it a community?
  - How do members feel?



# 1b Example: Biochemistry 101 Study Group

*What are the characteristics of your community?*

Activity 1b: What are the characteristics of your community?					
Your name	Your community name	Is membership clearly defined?	Is there a formal process for joining?	What makes it a community?	How do your members feel?
Sally Squirrel	Biochemistry 101 Study Group	Membership is limited - only for students currently enrolled in Biochemistry 101	No - students can just show up, but not everyone on the course knows the group exists.	Members have a shared purpose - to pass the class!	Members feel supported by one another, they may form friendships, bring snacks to share and start to engage in social activities together outside the group.

# 1b Activity: What are the characteristics of your community?

In randomly assigned breakouts:

- **Briefly introduce yourselves:**
  - say your name
  - share the number of your row in the spreadsheet
  
- **Discuss your answers to the questions**
  - You can use your spreadsheet answers to support the conversations
  - Do you notice any themes?



# CSOCTE

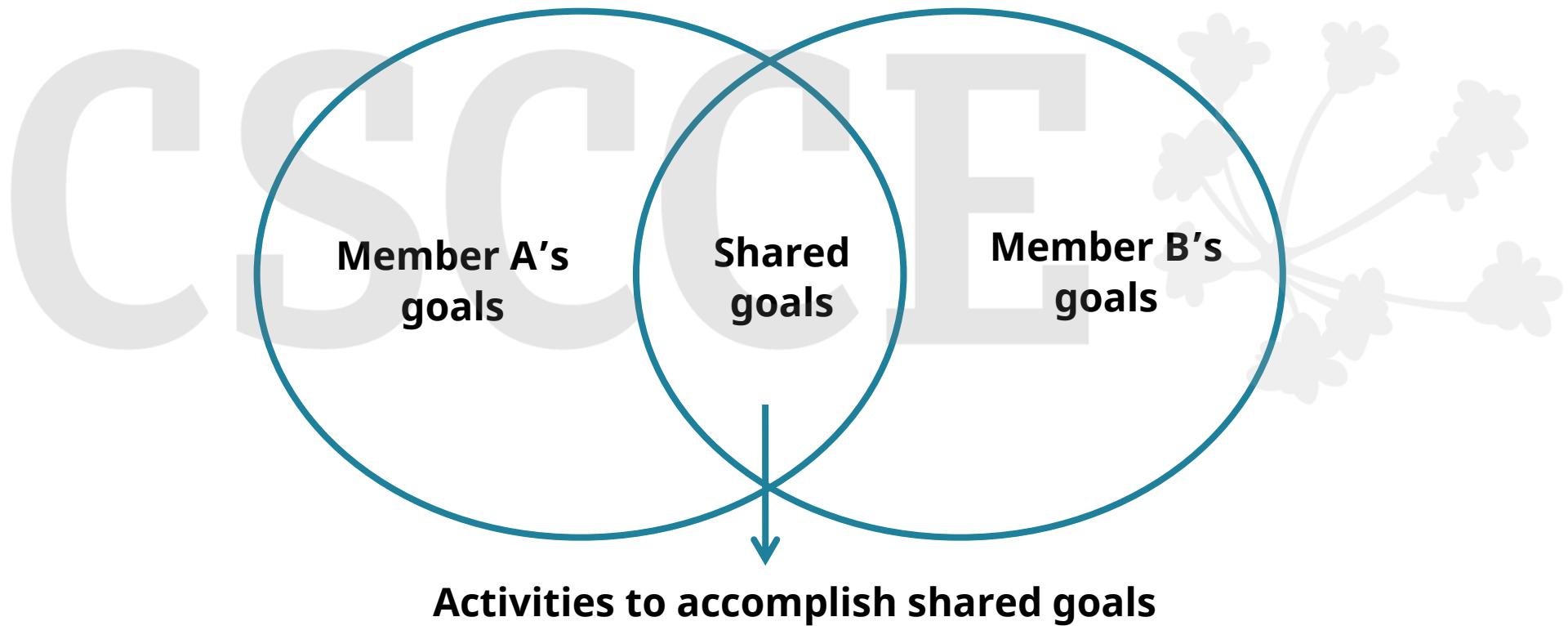
Debrief

# CSCE

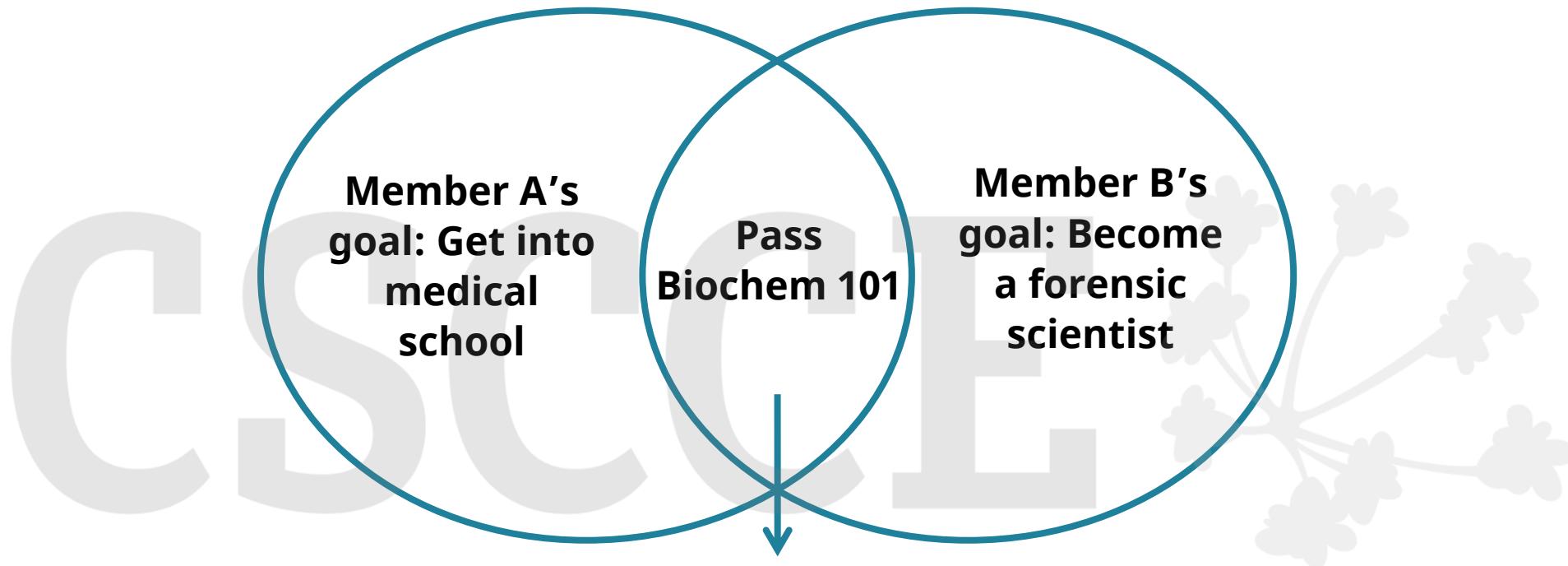
A community is...

# Community is...where members have shared purpose

**Community persists where we learn, share or create something together that we couldn't do on our own.**



# Example: The Biochemistry 101 Study Group



**Meet weekly to support one another and provide accountability for doing weekly homework assignments**

# Community is somewhere members feel belonging

**“Belonging** is being somewhere where you want to be, and they want you.

**Fitting in** is being somewhere you really want to be, but they don't care one way or the other.”

- From Brene Brown's *Braving the Wilderness*



Image credit: CSCCE

## Key questions

- In what way does belonging matter for your potential project?
- Do you anticipate any challenges with creating a sense of belonging amongst those involved in your potential project?
- Who doesn't belong in your community?

In the Biochemistry study group, evidence that some members feel belonging is that they were bringing snacks to share and organizing social activities together. However, not everyone who could be in the group knows about it.

# Community is...where we get to shape culture together

**Community is a vessel for culture. It's within the shared space of relationship to one another that we can experiment with and shape new behaviors.**



## Key questions

- What are the behavior changes you want to see as a result of members participating in your project?
  - E.g., Will they be more willing to use preprints?
  - E.g., Will they be more aware of harmful behaviors in research communities – and more confident about speaking out?
- Will these changes be externally visible beyond the community? How will you measure them?
  - E.g., Increased number of pre-prints submitted
  - E.g., Better results in a survey of research culture

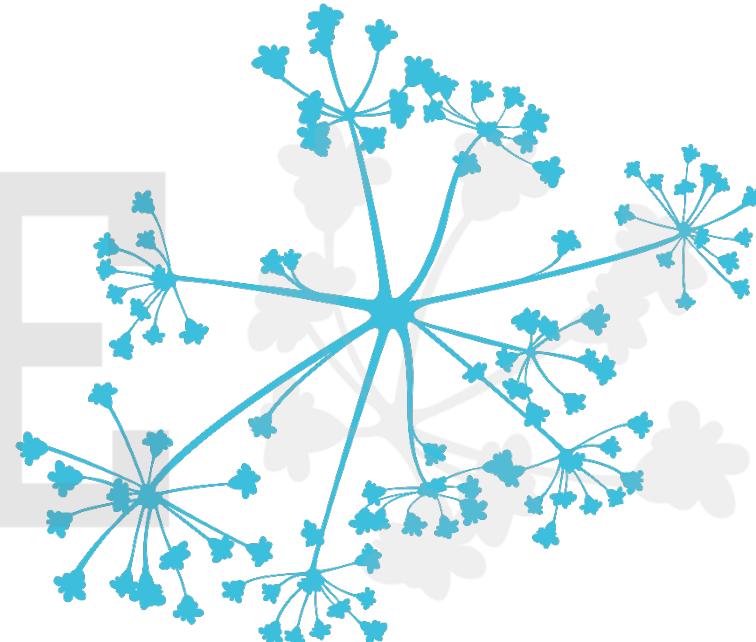
Image credit: CSCCE

**In the Biochemistry study group, behavior change might look like more people completing the course, feeling more confident and connected about their studies.**

# What do we mean by community?

## We think of it as...

- A group of people who have come together with a **shared purpose** (or multiple overlapping purposes)
- A group to which members feel **belonging** – which cultivates commitment to it
- A place where participants can **shape culture** – by sharing information and learning together



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Questions?



Community and your  
eLife project

# Communities may exist within a broader ecosystem

- Departments, programs, or initiatives where work gets done together. This could look like:
  - An individual research lab
  - Working groups
  - Committees
  - Clubs
- Research collaborations spanning many different institutions
- Organizations that support the above
  - Universities or colleges
  - Not-for-profit organizations
  - Professional associations
  - Companies

**As we continue reflecting on our scientific communities today, think about the communities you're currently affiliated with.**

**How you can work within them or create a new sub-community to advance your project?**

# 1c Activity: How is your research community related to the topic you care about?

- Thinking about the project that you might be working on as part of the eLife Ambassador program, **silently answer the following questions next to your number:**
  - What topic do you want to focus on?
  - Do you anticipate working within the community you previously described?
  - If so, how do those community members feel about the topic that you're passionate about?
  - Do some members feel differently about the topic than others?
  - Are there other individuals or groups that you could work with to execute your project?



Screenshot of the topics you're most passionate about from:  
<https://graphcommons.com/graphs/5177afce-e78a-4916-95f8-2b039e97a0da>

# 1c Example: Biochemistry 101 Study Group

*How is your research community related to the topic that you care about?*

Activity 1c: How is your research community related to the topic you care about?						
Your name	Your community name	Which topic do you want to focus on?	Do you anticipate working within the community you previously described?	If so, how do those community members feel about the topic that you care about?	Do some members play different roles within the community?	Are there other individuals or groups that to that you could work with to execute your project?
Sally Squirrel	Biochem 101 Study Group	Mental health and well-being	Yes - the Biochemistry 101 study group is already providing peer support for some of the students, but many don't know that the group exists. It also doesn't explicitly have resources dedicated to mental health.	<i>Some members may feel uncomfortable sharing their mental health struggles and prefer to access resources privately. Some members may feel they are competing with the other members. Others may have capacity and interest in addressing mental health topics.</i>	<i>Yes, some in the group are leaders while others are contributors. Students are interested in different career paths may have different background expertise and be experiencing distinct challenges as a result.</i>	<i>Yes, the university counseling center and the head of the department and/or course organizers.</i>

# CSOCTE

Debrief

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Community sketches

# Homework

## • TASK ONE

- **Draw a sketch of your existing research community** (by hand or digitally – it's up to you!)
- Include the various people and groups both directly and indirectly involved with the community
- Map out where you think your project will fit

## • TASK TWO

- **Write a sketch summary describing how you might work with the people or groups indicated on your diagram to advance the goals of your project**
- See the **example sketch and sketch summary** in the virtual notes doc if you need some inspiration

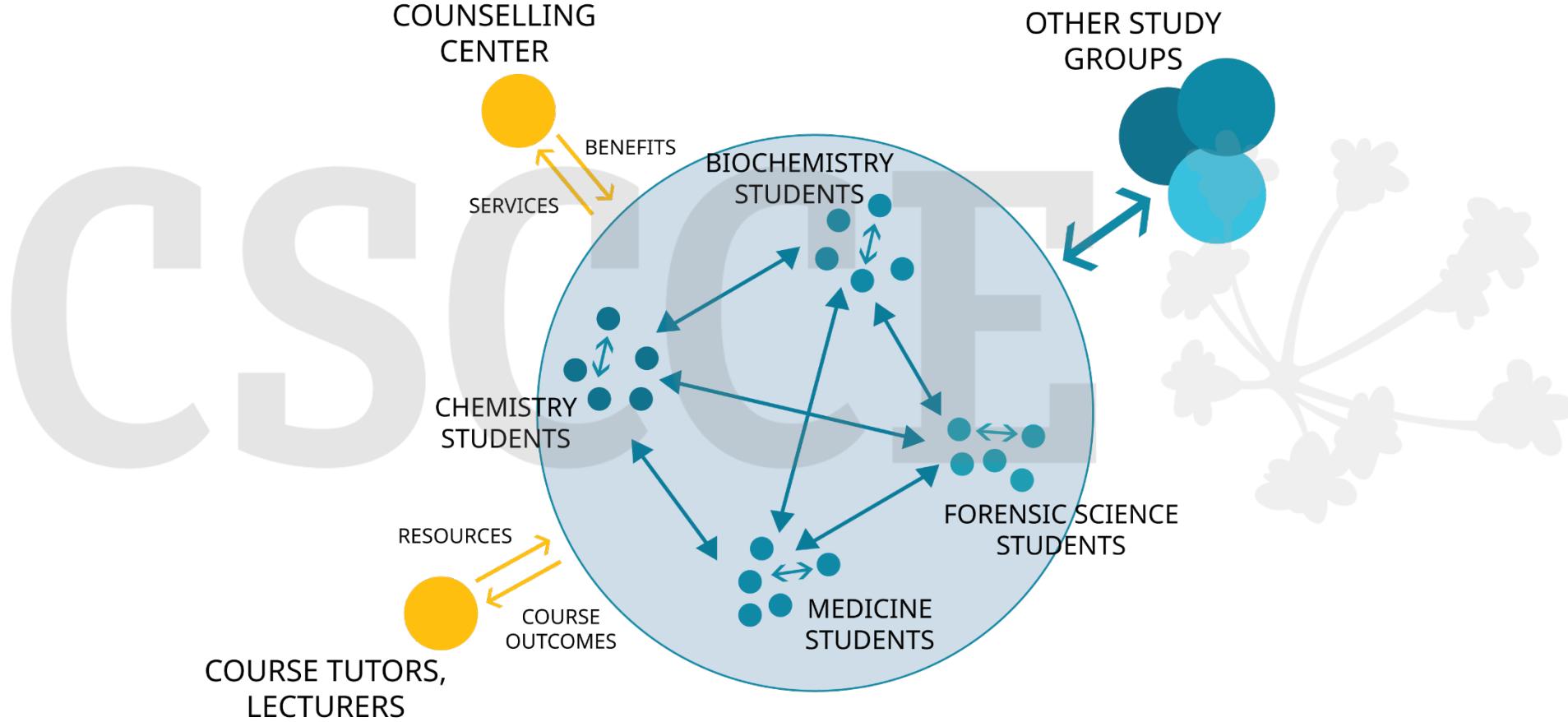
## • TASK THREE

- Read the **CSCCE Community Participation Model Guidebook**



**This should take around an hour or less to complete**

# Example sketch: Biochemistry 101 Study Group



# Example sketch summary: Supporting the mental health of Biochemistry 101 students

- Biochemistry 101 is a challenging course that is important for a number of career paths.  
Many students struggle with the content *and* stress and anxiety related to taking the course.
- Many students are unaware of the campus counseling center. Those who have tried to use it have also found it difficult to get an appointment.
- For my project, I would like to support students taking the course in a way that could potentially be replicated for other subjects or at other departments.
- I could work with students leading the Biochemistry study group, the head of the department, and the university counseling center to create a pilot workshop series addressing mental health.
- If successful, this could be re-used for other study groups and integrated into the information students receive when they start the course.

# Coming up next time

- **Reviewing your community sketches**
  - Understand that communities have different members, with different needs and motivations
- **The CSCCE Community Participation Model**
  - How it can be used to understand different modes of engagement
  - Using the model to identify appropriate activities and communications for your project
  - Identify existing activities already happening within your communities that you can connect with
- **Mapping activities to the CSCCE Community Participation Model**



**See you next time!**

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Thank you – see you  
at our next workshop!