**Table of Contents**

Problem Space and Target Population...........................................................................2 Research Plan.........................................................................................................2 Overview........................................................................................................2 Expanded.......................................................................................................2 Assignment Attribution................................................................................................3

1 of 3 Problem Space, Research Plan and Attribution

**Problem Space and Target Population** Among many of Aristotle’s famous philosophies, there was one in which he claimed that ‘Man is essentially a social animal by nature.’ We may be no Aristotle, but all of us intuitively understand the importance of communities, because we are compelled by the necessity of them. The obvious central role that community plays in the human “experience” is why we have chosen our problem space to be: Finding Communities.

The target population whose needs we are trying to meet are university students. From both personal experience and discussions with fellow peers, it can be agreed upon that a common feeling amongst many university students is that of isolation. As students at the University of Toronto, it is easy to sympathize with other students also attending institutions with large student-bodies, and their feelings of loneliness or lack of belonging. It can be difficult for university students to feel like they belong to a meaningful community, despite technically being a part of a greater school community.

**Research Plan Overview:** In an effort to discover the more specific issues within our problem space, our research plan will begin with analyzing the nature of community in an HCI context. Based on our secondary research, we plan to formulate interview and research questions that we could then use to conduct research on our target audience: fellow students at the University of Toronto.

**Expanded:** We decided each to explore different areas of the problem so that we could get as wholesome a picture as possible. We decided to divide the research into the following areas:

● The role of and importance of online communities in crowdfunding.

● The role of and importance of online communities in learning environments.

● The ways in which knowledge sharing works in online communities.

● The relationship between increased visitor engagement by good experience design and a heightened sense of community.

● Novel methods with which one could enhance interaction among people with similar interests.

As can be seen, the first two research areas examine the need for and impact online communities have in specific domains. The third examines the way knowledge is shared in these communities, and the fourth considers the role experience design plays in heightening a sense of community. Finally, the last research topic examines new possibilities in conceiving such communities.

In terms of user research, we want to ensure that the solution we find to the specific problem in our problem space is as accessible and inclusive as possible. By conducting user research and following guides in accessible and inclusive design, we will make data-driven decisions in the design process of our solution. In addition, we will perform competitive analysis to discover the current avenues (such as student life clubs, FLCs, other student organizations) that exist to solve similar problems that currently exist in our problem space, and how we can improve upon them.

2 of 3 Problem Space, Research Plan and Attribution

Assignment Attribution (All other aspects of the assignment were handled together):

Name Role Topic

Dennis Markovchyn Research The relationship between increased visitor

engagement by good experience design and a heightened sense of community.

Utkarsh Agarwal Research Novel methods with which one could

enhance interaction among people with similar interests.

Kevin Huang Research The role of and importance of online

communities in crowdfunding.

Roshan Ravishankar Research The ways in which knowledge sharing

works in online communities.

Ryan Young Research The role of and importance of online

communities in learning environments.